

Questions and Answers 1

Question 1.1 How do we, in the four stages of *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), decide when to go from one stage to another?

Answer 1.1 The Buddha taught *ānāpānasati* step by step: long breath, short breath, whole breath and subtle breath, only for easy understanding. At the time of actual practice, all four stages may occur at the same time.

Then, if you can concentrate on the whole long breath, and the whole short breath for about one hour, then (as your concentration improves) the breath will automatically become subtle, and you can change to concentrate on the subtle breath. When the subtle breath is long, you should try to know the whole, long, subtle breath; when the subtle breath is short, you should try to know the whole, short, subtle breath.

If the breath does not become subtle by itself, you should concentrate on it (attention (*manāsikāra*)) with the decision that it should be subtle.¹ That way it will become subtle, but you must not make the breath subtle on purpose, nor make it long or short on purpose; just decide that it should be calm. In this way, long breath, short breath, whole breath and subtle breath, all the four stages, are included in a single stage.

¹ For more details about calming the breath, please see p.44.

At the early part of the fourth stage, the breath becomes only very subtle. It does not cease entirely. The breath ceases entirely only at the fourth jhāna. This is the subtlest stage.

Question 1.2 Is it necessary, in meditation, to have a nimitta?

Answer 1.2 In some meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) like *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), kasiṇa meditation and repulsiveness meditation (*asubha*), a nimitta is necessary. If one wants to attain jhāna in other meditation subjects, like recollection-of-The-Buddha (*Buddhānussati*), a nimitta is not possible. In lovingkindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*), breaking down the barriers is called the nimitta.¹

Question 1.3 Some say that while practising *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) their soul goes out of the body. Is that true, or are they on the wrong path?

Answer 1.3 A concentrated mind can usually create a nimitta. When concentration is deep, strong, and powerful, then because of different perceptions, different nimittas appear. For example, if you want the nimitta to be long, it will be long; if you want it to be short, it will be short; if you want it to be round, it will be round; if you want it to be red, it will be red. So various perceptions may arise while practising *ānāpānasati*. You may perceive yourself as outside the body. It is simply a mental creation, not because of a soul. It is not a problem. Just ignore it, and return to being mindful of your breath.

¹ Only a name, for it is in fact not a nimitta.

Only when you discern ultimate mentality-materiality (*paramattha nāma-rūpa*) internally and externally, can you solve the problem of a soul: you will not find a soul anywhere. So, you need to break down the compactness of mentality and materiality, and realize ultimate mentality and materiality.

Nānādhātuyo vinibbhujitvā ghanavinibbhoge kate

anattalakkhaṇaṃ yāthāvasarasato upaṭṭhāti

(When we break down compactness,

the perception of non-self (*anatta saññā*) will arise.)¹

It is because of the perception of compactness, that the perception of a soul arises.

To break down the compactness of materiality, you must first discern the rūpa-kalāpas (small particles). Then you must discern the different types of ultimate materiality, which are at least eight in each rūpa-kalāpa. Without doing this the perception of a soul will not disappear.²

Similarly, without breaking down the compactness of mentality, the perception of a soul will not disappear. For example, when your mind wanders, you may think that the wandering mind is your soul.

¹ Vs.xxi 'Upakkilesavimutta-Udayabbayañāṇa Kathā' B739 ('Knowledge of Contemplation of Rise and Fall II'.Ñ4)

² For the delusion of compactness in materiality, please see also 'How You Analyse the Rūpa-Kalāpas', p.152

And how do you break down the compactness of mentality?

Take, for example a mind-door cognitive-process of access concentration that has the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object.

Such a cognitive-process has one mind-door adverting-consciousness and seven impulsion-consciousnesses (*jāvanas*). In the mind-door adverting-consciousness moment there are twelve mental formations, and in each impulsion moment there are thirty-four mental formations.

There are four types of compactness in such a cognitive process that need to be broken down by insight knowledge:

1. Compactness of continuity (*santati ghana*):
to break this down, you need to discern how a different consciousness, and its associated mental factors, arises in each consciousness-moment throughout the cognitive process.
2. Compactness of group (*samūha ghana*):
to break this down, you need to discern each consciousness and each of its associated mental factors in every consciousness-moment throughout the cognitive-process.
3. Compactness of function (*kiicca ghana*):
to break this down, you need to discern the characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause of each consciousness and each of its associated mental factors.
4. Compactness of object (*ārammaṇa ghana*):
to break this down, you need to discern the insight-knowledge cognitive-process that discerned the cognitive process you have just examined (the mind-door cognitive-process of access concentration). This means the cognitive-process that

knew needs itself to be known by a subsequent cognitive process.

If you break down the four types of compactness of mentality this way, you will see only the rapid arising and passing-away of consciousnesses and their associated mental factors.

With that perception of impermanence, one can no longer think one's consciousness is one's soul, because with the perception of impermanence comes the perception of non-self. As said by The Buddha, in the '*Meghiya Sutta*':¹

Aniccasaññino meghiya anattasaññā sañhāti.

(For those who have powerful insight-knowledge of impermanence, insight-knowledge of non-self will also appear clearly.)

Question 1.4 Where does the [*ānāpāna*] nimitta come from? What makes it appear?

Answer 1.4 Most mind states that arise dependent upon the heart-base produce breathing. A real *ānāpāna*-nimitta comes from the breath. But not every mind state produces a nimitta. Only a deeply concentrated mind produces a nimitta. Therefore, the breath produced by a deep and concentrated mind makes an *ānāpāna*-nimitta appear. If the nimitta is far from the nostrils, it is not a real nimitta. A nimitta may appear because of concentration, but not necessarily the real *ānāpāna*-nimitta. If the nimitta produces *jhāna*, we call it an *ānāpāna*-nimitta. But if it does not produce

jhāna, it is not the real *ānāpāna*-nimitta. If you concentrate on that nimitta, *jhāna* will not arise. Usually the concentration cannot become strong and powerful. If you meditate on that nimitta, it will very soon disappear.

Question 1.5 What are the seven stages of purification and sixteen insight-knowledges?

Answer 1.5 The seven stages of purification are:

1. Purification of Morality(*sīla visuddhi*)
2. Purification of Mind(*citta visuddhi*)
3. Purification of View(*diṭṭhi visuddhi*)
4. Purification of Overcoming Doubt(*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa visuddhi*)
5. Purification of Knowledge and Vision of
What Is and What Is Not the Path(*maggāmaḅgañāḅadassana visuddhi*)
6. Purification of Knowledge and Vision of the Way(*paṭipadāñāḅadassana visuddhi*)
7. Purification of Knowledge and Vision(*ñāḅadassana visuddhi*)

And the sixteen insight-knowledges are:

1. Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-Materiality(*nāma-rūpa pariccheda ñāḅa*)
2. Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition(*pacaya-pariggaha ñāḅa*)
3. Knowledge of Comprehension(*sammasana ñāḅa*)
4. Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away(*udayabbaya ñāḅa*)
5. Knowledge of Dissolution(*bhaḅga ñāḅa*)
6. Knowledge of Terror(*bhaya ñāḅa*)
7. Knowledge of Danger(*ādīnava ñāḅa*)
8. Knowledge of Disenchantment(*nibbidā ñāḅa*)
9. Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance(*muñcītukamyatā ñāḅa*)
10. Knowledge of Reflection(*paṭisaḅkhā ñāḅa*)

¹ U.iv.1 (also A.IX.Ii.3)

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11. Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations..... (*sankhārupekkhā ñāṇa*)
12. Knowledge of Conformity..... (*anuloma ñāṇa*)
13. Knowledge of Change-of-lineage..... (*gotrabhu ñāṇa*)
14. Knowledge of the Path..... (*magga ñāṇa*)
15. Knowledge of Fruition..... (*phala ñāṇa*)
16. Knowledge of Reviewing..... (*paccavekkhaṇa ñāṇa*)

Now you know the names of the insight-knowledges: have you experienced them? No. That is why to have only theoretical knowledge is not enough; you must practise with great effort to also realize them.

[At the end of this talk the Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw added the following comment on the five hindrances.]

Now let us discuss briefly the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*):

1. Sensual Desire..... (*kāmacchanda*)
2. Ill-Will..... (*byāpāda*)
3. Sloth and Torpor..... (*thina middha*)
4. Restlessness and Remorse..... (*uddhacca kukkucca*)
5. Doubt..... (*vicikicchā*)

The first hindrance, sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), is attachment to property or people. It is the desire for sense objects. For example, you may get attached to your *kuṭi*¹ or room. While meditating you may think, 'Oh, it would be good if my *kuṭi* were beautiful.' Or you may think, 'Oh, it would be good if the whole room belonged

¹ A *kuṭi* is a monastic dwelling for one, a cell or lodge.

to me!' If you are overwhelmed by sensual desire, you will not be able to concentrate well on your meditation object. You must exert strong mindfulness and make effort to stop the arising of sensual desire.

The second hindrance is ill-will (*byāpāda*). It is hatred for or dissatisfaction with people or things. For example, if the yogi sitting next to you, while sitting down, makes a noise with his robes, you may become angry and think, 'Oh, why is he making so much noise!!' If your mind is overwhelmed by hatred or dissatisfaction, you will not be able to concentrate well on your meditation object either.

The third hindrance is sloth and torpor (*thina middha*). If the mind is weak, or not interested in the meditation object, sloth and torpor can occur. Sometimes, however, sleepiness may be due to tiredness, illness, or lack of rest.

The fourth hindrance is restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca kukkucca*). If your mind is restless, it will be like a heap of ashes hit by a stone, flying about and scattering. The mind is scattered. While meditating, you must not relax the mind, and let it leave your meditation object. If you do, restlessness will occur. Remorse is to regret bad deeds done, and good deeds not done in the past. Here too, you must exert strong mindfulness, and make great effort to stop the arising of restlessness and remorse.

The fifth hindrance is doubt (*vicikicchā*). It is having doubts about:

1. The Buddha
2. The Dhamma
3. The Saṅgha

4. The three trainings: morality, concentration, and wisdom.
5. The past five aggregates (*khandhā*), which is past lives.
6. The future five aggregates, which is future lives.
7. Both the past and future five aggregates, which is past and future lives.
8. Dependent-Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), which includes the present five aggregates.

If you have doubts about the training in concentration, you cannot meditate well. For example, you may think: ‘Is it possible to attain jhāna through *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing)?

Can jhāna be attained by concentrating on the *ānāpāna-nimitta*?’

The five hindrances are opposite to jhāna concentration.

Question 2.1 How should beginners balance the faculties (*indriya*) of concentration and wisdom? How should they practise wisdom in *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing)?

Answer 2.1 We already talked about balancing the five controlling faculties in the very first talk, but we can summarize what was said. It is not so important for beginners to balance concentration and wisdom. This is because they are only beginners, and their five controlling faculties are not yet developed. In the beginning of meditation, there is usually much restlessness in the mind. So the faculties are not yet strong and powerful. Only when they are strong and powerful is it necessary to balance them. But if beginners are able to balance the faculties already at the beginning stage, that is of course also good.

For example, you are now practising *ānāpānasati*; *ānāpānasati* is mindfulness-of-breathing. Knowing the breath is wisdom (*paññā*). Being mindful of the breath is mindfulness (*sati*). One-pointedness of mind on the breath is concentration (*samādhi*). The effort to know the breath clearly is effort (*vīriya*). Having faith that *ānāpānasati* can lead to jhāna is faith (*saddhā*).

Beginners must try to develop strong and powerful controlling faculties. Their faith in *ānāpānasati* must be strong enough. Their effort to know the breath clearly must be strong enough. Their mindfulness of the breath must be strong enough. Their concentration on the breath must be strong enough. They must see the breath clearly. They must try to make their five controlling facul-

ties strong and powerful, as well as try to balance them. If one is excessive, the others cannot function properly.

For example, if faith is too strong and powerful, it produces emotion. This means that the effort faculty cannot maintain associated mental formations on the breath; mindfulness cannot become established on the breath; the concentration faculty too, cannot concentrate deeply on the breath; and wisdom cannot know the breath clearly.

When, for example, effort is excessive, it makes the mind restless, so the other controlling faculties become again weak, and cannot function properly. When mindfulness is weak, you cannot do anything, because you cannot concentrate on the breath, will make little or no effort to discern the breath, and may have no faith.

Now you are practising Samatha. In Samatha meditation, strong and powerful concentration is good, but excessive concentration produces laziness. With laziness, the other faculties become again very weak, and cannot function properly.

At this stage wisdom is very dull or inferior. It knows only the natural breath. So for the beginner who is practising Samatha meditation, it is enough just to know the breath clearly. When the uggaha or paṭibhāga-nimitta appears, wisdom knows the uggaha or paṭibhāga-nimitta. Too much general knowledge apart from this is not good, as you may always be discussing and criticizing. If a yogi discusses and criticizes *ānāpānasati* too much, we can say his wisdom is excessive, which also makes the other controlling faculties weak, and unable to function properly.

So, even though it is not yet very important, it is still good for a beginner to balance his five controlling faculties. How to balance them? We must practise with strong and powerful mindfulness and effort to know the breath clearly, and concentrate on the breath with faith.

Question 2.2 Why don't we, after attaining the fourth jhāna, go straight to discern the five aggregates, their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, and attain Nibbāna? Why do we before attaining Nibbāna need to practise meditation on the thirty-two parts of body, skeleton, white kasiṇa, four-elements, materiality, mentality, dependent-origination, and Vipassanā?

Answer 2.2 The Buddha taught the five-aggregates method of practising Vipassanā to three types of person: those who have sharp wisdom, those whose insight-knowledge of mentality is not clear, and those who prefer to practise Vipassanā in the brief way.

What are the five aggregates? What is the difference between the five aggregates and mentality-materiality? Do you know the answer?

Before answering your second question, let us discuss mentality-materiality and the five aggregates. There are four ultimate realities (*paramattha*): consciousness (*cittā*), associated mental factors (*cetasikā*), materiality (*rūpa*), and Nibbāna.

To attain Nibbāna, the fourth ultimate reality, we must see the impermanent, suffering and non-self nature of the other three, that is, we must see:

1. Eighty-nine types of consciousness

2. Fifty-two associated mental factors
3. Twenty-eight types of materiality¹

The eighty-nine types of consciousness are called the consciousness-aggregate (*viññāṇakkhandha*). Of the fifty-two associated mental factors, feeling is the feeling-aggregate (*vedanākkhandha*); perception is the perception-aggregate (*saññākkhandha*); and the remaining fifty associated mental factors are the formations-aggregate (*saṅkhārakkhandha*). Sometimes the consciousnesses (*cittā*) and associated mental factors (*cetasikā*) together are called mentality (*nāma*). Sometimes they are seen as four aggregates, the feeling-aggregate, the perception-aggregate, the formations-aggregate and the consciousness-aggregate, which together are the mentality-aggregate (*nāma khandha*). The materiality-aggregate (*rūpakkhandha*) is the twenty-eight types of materiality. The consciousnesses, associated mental factors and materiality together are called ‘mentality-materiality’ (*nāmarūpa*). They are sometimes also called the five aggregates: materiality, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. Their causes are also only mentality-materiality.

These five aggregates subject to clinging are *Dukkha sacca Dhammā*: the dhammas of the Noble Truth of Suffering. They need to be understood as such. In the ‘*Mahānidāna Sutta*’ of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, The Buddha explains:

This dependent origination is profound, Ānanda, and profound it appears. And, Ānanda, it is through not knowing, through not penetrating this

¹ For a full list, please see Table 1, p.169

Dhamma, that this generation has become become a tangled skein, a knotted ball of thread, matted as the roots in a bed of reeds, and finds no way out of the round of rebirths with its states of loss, unhappy destinations...perdition.¹

With regard to this statement, the commentaries explain:

There is no one, even in a dream, who has got out of the fearful round of rebirths, which is ever destroying [beings] like a thunderbolt, unless he has severed with the knife of knowledge, well whetted on the stone of sublime concentration, this Wheel of Becoming [Dependent-Origination], which offers no footing owing to its great profundity and is hard to get by owing to the maze of many methods.²

This means that the yogi who does not know, and has not penetrated Dependent-Origination by the different stages of insight knowledge, cannot escape from the round of rebirths.

And in the ‘*Titthāyatana Sutta*’ of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, this was said by The Buddha:³

And what, bhikkhu, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering?

With ignorance as condition, [there are] volitional formations; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality; with mentality-materiality as condition, the six sense-bases; with the six sense-bases as condition, contact; with contact as condi-

¹ D.ii.2 ‘*Mahānidāna Sutta*’ (‘Great Causation Sutta’)

² VbhA.vi.1 ‘*Suttantabhājanīya Vaṇṇanā*’ (‘By Sutta Comment’). Vs.xvii ‘*Bhava cakka Kathā*’ B661 (‘The Wheel of Becoming Explanation’ N344.)

³ A.III.II.ii.1 ‘*Titthāyatana Sutta*’ (‘Sectarian Doctrines Sutta’)

tion, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, ageing-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair come to be.

Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

This is also called dependent origination. And The Buddha says dependent origination is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*).

The Noble Truth of Suffering, which is the five clinging aggregates, and the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, which is dependent origination, are called formations (*saṅkhārā*). They are the object of Vipassanā, insight knowledge. At the different stages of insight knowledge you comprehend these formations as impermanence (*anicca*), as suffering (*dukkha*), and as non-self (*anatta*). Without knowing and penetrating them, how can you comprehend them that they are impermanent etc.? That is why we teach Vipassanā systematically.

To know ultimate materiality, the materiality-aggregate of clinging, you must practise four-elements meditation till you see that materiality consists of small particles that we call *rūpakalāpas*, and you need to see the four elements in those small particles.¹ And you need to discern both the base and its object to-

¹ For four elements meditation and related details, please see Talk 4, p.131.

gether.¹ Without discerning materiality this way, you cannot discern mentality, the four mental aggregates of clinging. That is why we teach Vipassanā stage by stage.

Now your second question. According to the Theravāda tradition, there are two types of meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*): *pārihāriya kammaṭṭhāna* and *sabbatthaka kammaṭṭhāna*. *Pārihāriya kammaṭṭhāna* is the meditation subject by which the individual yogi develops concentration to be used for Vipassanā. The yogi must always use that meditation subject as his foundation. *Sabbatthaka kammaṭṭhāna*, on the other hand, is the meditation subjects to be developed by all yogis alike.² They are the four protective meditations:

1. Lovingkindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*)
2. Recollection-of-The-Buddha (*Buddhānussati*)
3. Recollection-of-death (*marañānussati*)
4. Foulness meditation (*asubha bhāvanā*)

So although a yogi uses *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) as his *pārihāriya kammaṭṭhāna*, he must practise the four protective meditations before going on to Vipassanā. This is the orthodox procedure.

To develop lovingkindness meditation up to jhāna, it is better if the yogi has already developed the white-kasiṇa meditation up to

¹ Please see further 'Introduction' p.6ff

² For how and why you must protect your meditation, please see above p. 16; for details, please see Talk 3 'How You Develop the Sublime Abidings and Protective Meditations'.

the fourth jhāna. An example of this is the five hundred bhikkhus to whom The Buddha taught the '*Karaṇīyamettā Sutta*'. Those bhikkhus were expert in the ten kasiṇas and eight attainments (*samāpatti*), had practised Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*), and had gone to the forest to meditate further. But they returned to the Buddha, because the devas resident in the forest had become annoyed and had frightened the bhikkhus. The Buddha taught the bhikkhus the '*Karaṇīyamettā Sutta*' both as a meditation subject and as a protective chant (*paritta*). As a meditation subject it is for those who have already attained lovingkindness jhāna (*mettā jhāna*), and have broken down the barriers between the different types of person.¹ The '*Karaṇīyamettā Sutta*' is a more specialized practice of lovingkindness, in which one practises up to the third jhāna by extending lovingkindness to eleven categories of beings with the thought: '*Sukhino vā khemino hontu, sabbe sattā bhavantu su-khitattā*' (May all beings be happy and secure etc.). The Texts say The Buddha knew those five hundred bhikkhus would very easily be able to do this, because they were already expert in the ten kasiṇas. And how is lovingkindness jhāna made easier by kasiṇa meditation?

In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, The Buddha taught that of the four colour kasiṇas, the white kasiṇa is best.² The white kasiṇa makes

¹ For details about lovingkindness jhāna, please see 'How You Develop the Sublime Abidings and Protective Meditations', p.97.

² A.X.I.iii.9 '*Paṭhamakosala Sutta*' ('First Kosala Sutta')

the yogi's mind clear and bright. A clear and tranquil mind is superior and powerful. If a yogi practises lovingkindness meditation with a clear mind, free from defilements, he usually attains lovingkindness jhāna within one sitting. So if one enters the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna, and after emerging from it, practises lovingkindness jhāna, it is very easy to succeed.

In order to attain the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna, a yogi should first practise skeleton meditation internally and externally, because this makes the white-kasiṇa meditation very easy. Therefore, after the fourth ānāpāna jhāna we usually teach yogis to do the thirty-two parts of the body, skeleton meditation and white-kasiṇa meditation. In our experience, most yogis say that the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna is better than the fourth ānāpāna jhāna, because it produces a clearer, brighter and more tranquil mind, which is also very helpful for practising other meditation subjects. So we usually teach white-kasiṇa meditation before lovingkindness meditation.

There is also a problem common to beginners. You may have practised lovingkindness meditation. Did you attain jhāna? In practice, if a yogi wants to extend lovingkindness to someone of the same sex, he should first take the smiling face of that person as object, and then develop lovingkindness towards him with: 'May this good person be free from mental suffering, etc.' With a beginner that smiling face very soon disappears. He cannot continue his lovingkindness meditation, because there is no object, and so he cannot attain lovingkindness jhāna or anything.

If he uses the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna, it is different. He emerges from the jhāna, and when he develops lovingkindness,

then because of the preceding concentration the smiling face will not fade away. He is able to concentrate deeply on that image, and able to attain up to the third lovingkindness jhāna within one sitting. If he practises systematically up to the breaking down of barriers between the different types of person, he can even practise the eleven ways of the ‘*Karaṇīyamettā Sutta*’, and five hundred and twenty-eight ways mentioned in the *Paṭisambhidā-magga* Pāli Text.¹ For this reason too, we usually teach the white-kasiṇa meditation before lovingkindness meditation.

You may also have practised recollection-of-The-Buddha (*Buddhānussati*). Did you attain access concentration? When those who have succeeded in lovingkindness jhāna practise recollection-of-The-Buddha, they are able to reach access concentration within one sitting, again because of the preceding concentration. Foulness meditation (*asubha*) too becomes easy. If a yogi practises foulness meditation up to the first jhāna, and then recollection-of-death (*maraṇānussati*), he is able to succeed within one sitting.

That is why we teach the white-kasiṇa meditation before the four protective meditations. If, however, a yogi wants to go straight to Vipassanā, without practising the four protective meditations, he can do so: no problem.

¹Ps.II.iv ‘*Mettā Kathā*’ (‘Lovingkindness Explanation’)

Question 2.3 Why, after having discerned materiality and mentality, must one practise the first and fifth methods of dependent-origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)? What are the first and fifth methods?¹

Answer 2.3 There are, according to the Theravāda tradition, seven stages of purification (*visuddhi*). The first five are:

1. The Purification of Morality(*sīla visuddhi*)
Morality (*sīla*) of four types:²
 - i Pātimokkha restraint.....(*pātimokkhā saṃvara sīla*)
 - ii Sense restraint.....(*indriya saṃvara sīla*)
 - iii Livelihood purification.....(*ājīva pārisuddhi sīla*)
 - iv With regard to requisites.....(*paccayasammissita sīla*)
2. The Purification of Mind.....(*citta visuddhi*)
Access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) and the eight attainments (*samāpatti*).³
3. The Purification of View.....(*diṭṭhi visuddhi*):
The Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-Materiality (*nāma-rūpa - pariccheda ñāṇa*).
4. The Purification by Overcoming Doubt.....(*kaṅkhāvitarāṇa visuddhi*):
The Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition (*paccaya pariggaha ñāṇa*), in other words, seeing dependent-origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).

¹For details about how you practise the first and fifth methods of dependent origination, please see Talk 6, p. 227ff.

²V.s.i. ‘*Sīlappabheda Kathā*’ B13ff ‘Morality-Classification Explanation’ Ñ42 for details.

³Vis.xviii ‘*Diṭṭhi-Visuddhi Niddesa*’ B662 (‘Description of Purification of View’ Ñ1)

5. The Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is and What Is Not the Path (*maggāmaggañānadassana visuddhi*): The Knowledge of Comprehension (*sammasana ñāṇa*) and Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*) which is the beginning of Vipassanā.

So before Vipassanā there are four purifications. Why? Vipassanā is insight, to comprehend the impermanence, suffering, and non-self nature of mentality-materiality and their causes. Without knowing mentality-materiality and their causes, how can we comprehend that they are impermanent, suffering, and non-self? How can we practise Vipassanā? It is only after we have thoroughly discerned mentality-materiality and their causes, that we can practise Vipassanā meditation.

Mentality-materiality and their causes are called ‘formations’ (*sāṅkhārā*). They pass away as soon as they arise, which is why they are impermanent; they are subject to constant arising and passing-away, which is why they are suffering; they have no self (*atta*), or stable and indestructible essence, which is why they are non-self.

Comprehending impermanence, suffering, and non-self in this way is real Vipassanā. So before Vipassanā, we teach yogis to discern mentality, materiality and dependent-origination. The commentary explains it as, ‘*aniccanti pañcakkhandhā*.’,¹ and ‘*aniccanti khandha pañcakam*.’² That means, ‘impermanence is the

¹ Vs.viii ‘*Ānāpānasati Kathā*’ B236 (Mindfulness-of-Breathing Explanation Ñ234). Vs.xxi ‘*Upakilesavimutta-Udayabbayañāṇa Kathā*’ B740 (‘Knowledge of Contemplation of Rise and Fall II’Ñ6)

² VbhA.ii.1 ‘*Suttantabhājanīya Vaṇṇanā*’ (‘By Sutta Comment’)

five aggregates.’ The five aggregates are, in other words, mentality-materiality and their causes. So real Vipassanā requires that you know the five aggregates, and their causes and effects.

The Buddha taught according to the character of his listeners, and taught four methods for discerning dependent-origination. In the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, there is yet another method.¹ Altogether there are five methods. The first of the methods taught by The Buddha is to discern dependent-origination in forward order:

Avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā,
saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇam,
viññāṇa paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ etc.

(With ignorance as condition, formations come to be; with formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality; [etc.]

The first method is popular in Theravāda Buddhism, but may be very difficult for those who have no Abhidhamma knowledge. Even yogis with good Abhidhamma knowledge may have many difficulties.

The fifth method taught by the Venerable Sāriputta, and recorded in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* Pāli Text, is easy for beginners. It is to discern that five past causes have produced five present effects, and that five present causes will produce five future effects. This is the main principle in the fifth method. If you want to

¹ Ps.I.i.4 *Dhammatthitīṇā Niddeso* (‘Standing-on-Phenomena Knowledge Description’)

know it with direct experience, you should practise up to this stage.

After practising the fifth method systematically, you will not have much difficulty in practising the first method. For this reason we teach the fifth method before the first method. We teach all five methods to those who have time, and want to practise further. But although The Buddha taught dependent-origination according to the character of his listeners, one method is enough to attain Nibbāna. Even so, because the first method is popular in Theravāda Buddhism, we teach both the fifth and first methods.

One day, the Venerable Ānanda practised dependent-origination in all four ways. In the evening, he went to The Buddha and said, **Bhante, although dependent-origination is deep, it is easy to me.** The Buddha replied:¹

*Etassa cānanda, dhammassa ananubodhā, appaṭivedhā evamayam pajā
tantākulakajātā, kulāgaṇṭhikajātā, muñjapabbajabhūtā apāyam duggatim vini-
pātāṃ saṃsāraṃ nātivattati.*

This means that without knowing dependent-origination, with the *anubodha ñāṇa* and the *paṭivedha ñāṇa*, one cannot escape the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), and four woeful realms (*apāya*). The *anubodha ñāṇa* is the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-Materiality (*nāma-rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa*), and Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition (*paccaya pariggaha ñāṇa*). The *paṭivedha ñāṇa* is all the

insight-knowledges (*vipassanā ñāṇa*). So without knowing dependent-origination with the *anubodha ñāṇa* and *paṭivedha ñāṇa*, one cannot attain Nibbāna. With this quotation, the commentary says that without knowing dependent-origination, no one can escape from the round of rebirths, even in a dream.¹

¹For further details, please see 'Introduction' p.31.

¹D.ii.2 'Mahānidāna Sutta' (Great Causation Sutta)

Questions and Answers 3

Question 3.1 In *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), there are the parikamma-nimitta, the uggaha-nimitta, and the paṭibhāga-nimitta. What is the parikamma-nimitta? Is the parikamma-nimitta always grey? What is the difference between the parikamma-nimitta and the uggaha-nimitta?

Answer 3.1 In *ānāpānasati*, there are three types of nimitta, three types of concentration (*samādhi*) and three types of meditation (*bhāvanā*).

The three types of nimitta are:

1. The parikamma-nimitta (preparatory sign)
2. The uggaha-nimitta (taken-up sign)
3. The paṭibhāga-nimitta (counterpart sign)

The three types of concentration are:

1. Preparatory concentration (*parikamma samādhi*)
Sometimes called momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*).
2. Access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*)
3. Absorption concentration (*appanā samādhi*)
Also called jhāna concentration: the eight attainments.¹

The three types of meditation are:

1. Preparatory meditation (*parikamma bhāvanā*)
2. Access meditation (*upacāra bhāvanā*)

¹ eight attainments: the four material jhānas, and four immaterial jhānas.

3. Absorption meditation (*appanā bhāvanā*)

The object of preparatory concentration can be the parikamma-nimitta, the uggaha-nimitta, and occasionally the paṭibhāga-nimitta. Preparatory meditation is the same as preparatory concentration.

Real access concentration, and real access meditation are very close to absorption concentration (jhāna); this is why they are called 'access'. But sometimes deep and strong concentration before absorption concentration, with the paṭibhāga-nimitta as object, is as a metaphor also called 'access concentration' or 'access meditation'. When preparatory concentration, or momentary concentration, is fully developed it leads to access concentration.

When access concentration is fully developed, it leads to absorption concentration (jhāna).

We already discussed the nimitta in previous talks. There are, as mentioned, three types of nimitta: the parikamma-nimitta, the uggaha-nimitta, and the paṭibhāga-nimitta.

1. The parikamma-nimitta (preparatory sign): The natural breath is a nimitta. The touching point is also a nimitta. Here the nimitta is the object of concentration. The Commentary says the nostril nimitta (*nāsika nimitta*), and upper-lip nimitta (*mukha nimitta*) are the parikamma-nimittas for beginners. When the concentration is a little stronger, a smoky grey usually appears around the nostrils. This smoky grey is also the parikamma-nimitta. It may have another colour too. The concen-

tration and meditation at the parikamma-nimitta stage are preparatory.

2. The uggaha-nimitta (taken-up sign): When the preparatory concentration increases in strength and power, the smoky grey usually changes to white: white like cotton wool. But it may become another colour, owing to a change in perception.¹ When the perception changes, the colour and shape of the nimitta may also change. If the colour and shape change very often, the concentration will gradually decrease. This is because whenever yogi's perception changes, his object thereby also changes, which means he has different objects. So the yogi should ignore the colour and shape of the nimitta. He should concentrate on it only as an ānāpāna-nimitta. The concentration and meditation on the uggaha-nimitta are also preparatory.
3. The paṭibhāga-nimitta (counterpart sign): When the concentration has become even stronger and more powerful, the uggaha-nimitta changes to the paṭibhāga-nimitta. Usually the paṭibhāga-nimitta is clear, bright and radiant, like the morning star. In this case too, if the perception changes, the nimitta may also change. If, when the concentration is strong and powerful, the yogi wants the nimitta to be long it will become long; if he wants it to be short it will become short; if he wants it to be ruby red, it will become ruby red. The

¹ For further details on the relationship between the nimitta and perception, please see p.48.

Visuddhi Magga says one should not do so.¹ If one does, then even though the concentration is deep, it will gradually decrease. This is because one has different perceptions, and thereby different objects. So a yogi should not play with the nimitta. If he plays with it he cannot attain jhāna.

The beginning stage of concentration and meditation on the paṭibhāga-nimitta are also preparatory. But close to jhāna they are access concentration, and access meditation. When absorption arises, the nimitta is still the paṭibhāga-nimitta, but the concentration is now absorption concentration, and the meditation is absorption meditation.

Question 3.2 What is the difference between access concentration and absorption concentration?

Answer 3.2 When the paṭibhāga-nimitta appears, the concentration is powerful. But at this stage, which is the stage of access concentration, the jhāna factors are not fully developed, and bhavaṅgas (life-continuum consciousnesses) still occur; one falls into bhavaṅga. The yogi will say that everything stopped, or may think it is Nibbāna, and say: 'I knew nothing then.' If he practises in this way, he can eventually stay in bhavaṅga for a long time.

In any kind of practice, be it good or bad, one will achieve one's aim, if one practises again and again. 'Practice makes perfect.' In this case too, if he practises again and again, in the same way, he may fall into bhavaṅga for a long time. Why does he say he knew

¹ Vs.iii 'Cattārisakammaṭṭhāna Vaṇṇanā' B47 ('Forty Meditations Subjects Comment' Ñ113)

nothing? Because the object of the bhavaṅga is the object of the near-death consciousness in the past life. That object may be kamma, a kamma sign (*kamma nimitta*) or a rebirth sign (*gati nimitta*). But the yogi cannot see this, because he has not yet discerned dependent-origination. It is only once he has discerned dependent-origination that he sees that the bhavaṅga took one of those objects.

If a yogi thinks it is Nibbāna, this idea is a very big ‘rock’ blocking the way to Nibbāna. If he does not remove this big ‘rock’, he cannot attain Nibbāna. Why does this idea occur? Many yogis think that a disciple (*sāvaka*) cannot know mentality-materiality as taught by The Buddha. So they do not think it is necessary to develop sufficiently deep concentration in order to discern mentality-materiality and their causes as taught by The Buddha. Thus their concentration is only weak, and bhavaṅgas still occur, because the jhāna factors too are weak. Their concentration cannot be maintained for long. If one purposely practises to fall into bhavaṅga, one will achieve one’s aim, but it is not Nibbāna. To attain Nibbāna we must practise the seven stages of purification step by step; without knowing ultimate mentality, ultimate materiality, and their causes, one cannot attain Nibbāna.

The problem of thinking that the attainment of knowing nothing is Nibbāna needs perhaps to be explained further.

Nibbāna is *visañkhāra*: that is, ‘without formations’. Formations (*sañkhārā*) are mentality-materiality and their causes, and Nibbāna is without either of them. The mind that knows Nibbāna is called *visañkhāragata citta*. But it is not itself *visañkhāra*: the act of seeing Nibbāna requires the formation of consciousness.

The consciousness that is formed when, for example, a Buddha or arahant enters the fruition attainment, and sees Nibbāna, is the arahant fruition-consciousness (*arahattaphala citta*), together with its associated mental factors. If the arahant fruition-consciousness is entered upon from the first jhāna, and is thus a first-jhāna arahant fruition-consciousness, there are thirty-seven mental formations. This principle applies in all the other Path and Fruition Knowledges. Together with their associated mental factors, they all take Nibbāna as object; and Nibbāna has the characteristic of peaceful bliss.

Whenever a Noble One (*ariya*) enters the fruition attainment, he knows Nibbāna, and with the knowledge of fruition enjoys the peaceful bliss that is Nibbāna.

It is therefore, impossible to enter one of the Fruition attainments and say about it: ‘Everything stopped: I knew nothing then.’ Before entering a fruition attainment, one determines how long it will last, for example one or two hours. And for the duration of that period, Nibbāna is known continuously as the peaceful bliss it is (*santisukha*).

It is therefore clear that when the yogi knows nothing, it is not because he has attained Nibbāna; it is because his concentration is still weak.

When the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta appears, the yogi’s mind may fall into bhavaṅga, because the jhāna factors are not yet strong. Just like, when learning to walk, a small child who is too weak to stand by himself, will fall down again and again. In the same way, at the access concentration stage, the jhāna factors are

still not fully developed, and one may fall into bhavaṅga: it is not Nibbāna.

To avoid falling into bhavaṅga, and to develop concentration further, you need the help of the five controlling faculties: faith (*saddhā*), effort (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), to push the mind and fix it on the paṭibhāga-nimitta. It takes effort to make the mind know the paṭibhāga-nimitta again and again, mindfulness to not forget it, and wisdom to know it.

At the absorption-jhāna stage, the jhāna factors are fully developed. Just like a strong and powerful man can stand up straight the whole day, a yogi can, taking the paṭibhāga-nimitta as object, stay in absorption jhāna for a long time without falling into bhavaṅga. Complete and uninterrupted absorption may continue for one, two, three hours, or more. At that time he does not hear a sound. His mind does not go to other objects. Apart from the paṭibhāga-nimitta, he knows nothing.

Question 3.3 Under what conditions, or in what state, can we say that a meditation experience is access concentration or absorption concentration?

Answer 3.3 If many bhavaṅgas occur during concentration, one can say that it is access concentration. But the nimitta must be the paṭibhāga-nimitta. Only if one is able to stay in complete absorption for a long time, without interruption, with also the paṭibhāga-nimitta as object, can one say it is absorption concentration.

How does a yogi know his mind is falling into bhavaṅga? When he notices that he has very often been unaware of the paṭibhāga-

nimitta, he knows there were bhavaṅgas. His mind may also for brief moments have thought of an object other than the paṭibhāga-nimitta. This does not happen in absorption concentration. In absorption concentration there is only complete absorption without interruption.

Question 3.4 Is there access concentration, as well as absorption concentration at each of the four jhānas? What are their characteristics?

Answer 3.4 Let us take the example of the ānāpāna jhānas, which take the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. There are four levels of access concentration, and four levels of absorption concentration. At each level there is access jhāna first, and then absorption jhāna. Both take the same ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. So it is the level of concentration that is different.

In the first, second, and third access-jhāna, there are five jhāna factors. But in the fourth access-jhāna, there is no bliss (*sukha*), only applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). Although they take the same nimitta as object, the jhāna factors become increasingly powerful at each access-jhāna.

The jhāna factors at the first access-jhāna suppress physical pain (*kāyika dukkha vedanā*); at the second, mental suffering (*domanassa vedanā*); at the third, physical pleasant feeling (*kāyika sukha vedanā*); and at the fourth, mental pleasant feeling or happiness (*somanassa vedanā*). This is how we distinguish between the different levels of access concentration, especially the fourth. At that level, the breath is the

subtlest, and has nearly stopped. It stops completely at the fourth absorption-jhāna.

We distinguish between the absorption-jhānas also by looking at the jhāna factors. In the first absorption jhāna, five jhāna factors are present: applied thought, sustained thought, joy, bliss and one-pointedness; in the second, three: joy, bliss and one-pointedness; in the third, two: bliss and one-pointedness; and in the fourth, also two: equanimity and one-pointedness. By looking at the jhāna factors, we can say, ‘This is the first absorption jhāna’, ‘This is the second absorption jhāna’, etc. Also, here the concentration increases level by level. Fourth-jhāna concentration is the highest. How is it the highest? You should try for yourself. Many yogis report that the fourth jhāna is the best and the quietest.

Question 3.5 Under what conditions does a yogi drop, or regress from absorption to access concentration? Under what conditions does a yogi in access concentration attain absorption concentration?

Answer 3.5 If the yogi does not respect his meditation practice, but respects objects other than the paṭibhāga-nimitta, many hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) will arise. Many thoughts of sensual pleasure and hatred will arise. They arise due to unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Those objects reduce the concentration, because wholesome dhammas and unwholesome dhammas are always in opposition. When wholesome dhammas are strong and powerful, unwholesome dhammas are far away, and when, because of unwise attention, unwholesome dhammas are strong and powerful, wholesome dhammas are far away. Wholesome and unwhole-

some dhammas cannot arise simultaneously in one consciousness-moment or cognitive-process.

Here we need to understand wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) and unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). When a yogi practises *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), and concentrates on the natural breath, his attention is wise attention. When the uggahanimitta or paṭibhāga-nimitta appears, and the yogi concentrates on it, his attention is still wise attention. If, in Vipassanā meditation, a yogi sees: ‘This is materiality’, ‘This is mentality’, ‘This is cause’, ‘This is effect’, ‘This is impermanence’, ‘This is suffering’, or ‘This is non-self’, his attention is also wise attention.

But if he sees: ‘This is a man, a woman, a son, a daughter, a father, a mother, a deity, a brahmā, an animal, etc.’; ‘This is gold, money, etc.’ then his attention is unwise attention. Generally speaking, we can say that because of wise attention many wholesome dhammas arise, and because of unwise attention many unwholesome dhammas arise. If, while you are practising meditation, unwise attention arises, then hindrances or defilements will certainly follow; they are unwholesome dhammas. Those unwholesome dhammas reduce the concentration, or cause it to regress and drop.

If you look at your meditation object with wise attention, again and again, then wholesome dhammas will arise and increase. Jhāna wholesome dhammas, for example, are among those wholesome dhammas. So, if you concentrate on the nimitta, such as the *ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*, again and again, it is wise attention. If you develop this wise attention to full strength, then

from access concentration you will attain absorption concentration.

Question 3.6 When a person dies, a kamma-nimitta may arise because of past wholesome or unwholesome kamma. Is this phenomenon similar to that which occurs during meditation, when images of past events, which the yogi had forgotten, appear?

Answer 3.6 There may be some similarity, but only in some cases. It may be similar to the arising of a kamma-nimitta in those whose death took place quickly.

Question 3.7 While meditating, images of events from more than thirty years back, which the yogi had forgotten, appear. Is this due to lack of mindfulness, which lets the mind leave the object?

Answer 3.7 It could be. But it could also be because of attention (*manasikāra*). Many yogis do not know about attention. Only once they have practised meditation on mentality do they understand it. Cognitive-processes occur very quickly, so they do not understand that these images appear because of attention. But no formation occurs by itself, without a cause. This is because all formations are conditioned.

Question 3.8 If, when dying, a person has strong mindfulness, can he prevent a kamma sign (*kamma nimitta*) of previous unwholesome or wholesome kamma from arising?

Answer 3.8 Strong, powerful mindfulness can prevent such nimittas from arising; but what is strong, powerful mindfulness? If a yogi enters jhāna, and keeps it completely stable right up to the time of

death, you can say that the mindfulness of that jhāna is strong and powerful. That type of mindfulness can prevent an unwholesome sign or sensual-realm wholesome sign from arising. It takes only the jhāna object, for example, an ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta or white-kasiṇa paṭibhāga-nimitta.

Another type of strong, powerful mindfulness is the mindfulness associated with insight-knowledge. If a yogi's insight-knowledge is the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā nāṇa*), and if he practises Vipassanā up to the near-death moment, then his near-death impulsion is insight-knowledge associated with strong and powerful mindfulness. That type of mindfulness can also prevent unwholesome signs from appearing, as well as prevent other wholesome signs from replacing his Vipassanā sign. The Vipassanā sign is the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of a chosen formation. He may die with such a sign as the object of his near-death impulsion (*maraṇāsanna javana*). It can produce a deva rebirth-linking consciousness (*deva paṭisandhi-citta*), so that he is spontaneously reborn as a deva.

Concerning the benefits that this type of yogi may get in his future life as a deva, The Buddha says in the 'Sotānugata Sutta' of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 'Catukka Nipāta':¹

So mutṭhassati kālaṃ kurumāno aññatarāṃ devanikāyaṃ upapajjati. Tassa tatha sukhino dhammapadā plavanti. Dandho bhikkhave satuppādo, atha so satto khippameva visesagāmī hoti.

¹ A.IV.IV.v.1 'Sotānugata Sutta' ('One Who Has Heard Sutta'), mentioned also p. 183, and p.248

(Bhikkhus, a worldling (*puthujjana*) who has heard the Teachings, often repeated Them, reflected upon Them, and thoroughly penetrated them with insight knowledge, if he dies, he may be reborn in one of the deva realms, where all formations appear clearly in his mind. He may be slow to reflect on the Dhamma or to do Vipassanā, but he attains Nibbāna very quickly.)

Why do formations appear clearly in his mind? Because the near-death impulsion-consciousness of the previous human life, and the bhavaṅga-consciousness of the following deva life take the same object, in this case the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of formations. The host, the bhavaṅga that is, already knows the Vipassanā object, which is why insight knowledge can easily be developed. So according to that sutta, strong mindfulness associated with insight-knowledge can prevent unwholesome signs from appearing, as well as other wholesome signs that may replace his Vipassanā sign. You should try to possess this type of mindfulness before death takes place.

An example of this is the ‘*Sakkapañha Sutta*’, about three bhikkhus who practised Samatha and Vipassanā.¹ They had good morality and good concentration, but their minds inclined towards life as male *gandhabbas*.² When they died they went to the deva realm. They were reborn as very beautiful and shiny *gandhabbas*, who looked sixteen years old. During their lives as bhikkhus, the

¹ D.ii.8 ‘*Sakkapañha Sutta*’ (‘Sakka’s Questions Sutta’)

² Musicians and dancers in the deva realm.

three bhikkhus had gone to a laywoman’s house every day for almsfood, and had taught her Dhamma. She had become a stream-enterer, and when she died, she was reborn as Gopaka, the son of Sakka. The three *gandhabbas* performed for the son of Sakka, and he saw that they were very beautiful and shiny. He thought: ‘They are very beautiful and shiny. What was their kamma?’ He saw they were the three bhikkhus who had come to his house when he was a laywoman. He knew that their virtue, concentration and wisdom had been very good. So he reminded them of their past life. He said: ‘When you listened to the teachings and practised the Dhamma, what were your eyes and ears directed at?’ Two of the *gandhabbas* remembered their past lives and were ashamed. They developed Samatha and Vipassanā again, quickly attained the non-returning path and fruition, and died. They were reborn in the realm of *Brahma Parohitā* (Brahma’s Ministers),¹ and attained arahantship there. The third bhikkhu was not ashamed, and remained a *gandhabba*.

So, it is not necessary to contact a life insurance company. This type of mindfulness is the best insurance.

Question 3.9 Is it necessary when discerning the twelve characteristics in four-elements meditation, to start with hardness, roughness, and heaviness in that sequence? Can one choose to start with any one of the characteristics?

¹ DA-II-8 ‘*Sakkapañha Sutta*’ (‘Sakka’s Questions Sutta’)

Answer 3.9 In the beginning we can start with a characteristic that is easy to discern. But once we can discern all the characteristics easily and clearly, we must follow the sequence given by The Buddha: earth-element (*pathavī-dhātu*), water-element (*āpo-dhātu*), fire-element (*tejo-dhātu*), and wind-element (*vāyo-dhātu*). This is because that sequence produces strong, powerful concentration. When we see the rūpa-kalāpas, and are able to easily discern the four elements in each one, the sequence is not important; what is very important then is to discern them simultaneously.

Why? The life span of a rūpa-kalāpa is very short. It may be less than a billionth of a second. When discerning the four elements in a rūpa-kalāpa there is not enough time to recite ‘earth, water, fire, wind’, so we must discern them simultaneously.

Question 3.10 Practising four-elements meditation enables one to balance the four elements in the body. One may at some time get sick because the four elements are out of balance. When one is sick, can one practise four-elements meditation with strong mindfulness to cure the sickness?

Answer 3.10 There are many types of affliction. Some afflictions are due to previous kamma, such as The Buddha’s back pain. Some afflictions are due to unbalanced elements. The afflictions produced by previous kamma cannot be cured by balancing the four elements. But some of the afflictions that occur because of unbalanced elements, may disappear when the yogi tries to balance them.

There are also afflictions that occur because of food, temperature (*utu*) or the mind (*citta*). If an affliction arises because of the

mind, and we can cure the mind, the affliction may disappear; if the affliction arises because of temperature, fire-element, as with cancer, malaria, etc., it can be cured only by taking medicine, not by balancing the elements. This is the same for afflictions produced by unsuitable food.

Question 3.11 Before we attain the fourth jhāna, and eradicate¹ ignorance (*avijjā*), many unwholesome thoughts still arise due to bad habits. For example, in our daily life (outside a meditation retreat) we know that greed or hatred arises. Can we use foulness meditation (*asubha*), or lovingkindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*) to remove them? Or should we ignore them and just concentrate on our meditation subject, and let them disappear automatically?

Answer 3.11 Unwholesome kamma has ignorance (*avijjā*) as a latent cause, and unwise attention as the proximate cause. Unwise attention is very harmful. If you are able to replace unwise attention with wise attention, the greed or hatred will disappear for a while, or maybe forever, if the wise attention is very strong and powerful. We already discussed wise and unwise attention in a previous question.

You can use foulness meditation or lovingkindness meditation to remove greed and hatred. These meditations are also wise attention. But Vipassanā is the best weapon to destroy defilements. It is the best wise attention.

¹ The fourth jhāna does not eradicate ignorance; it only suppresses ignorance. Please see further Answers 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9 p.285ff

Question 3.12 How does the bhavaṅga function in the sensual realms, fine-material realms, immaterial realms and supramundane realm? Would the Sayadaw please explain with examples?

Answer 3.12 The function of the bhavaṅga is the same in the first three types of realm.¹ It arises so the consciousness-moments in a life do not stop; it maintains the mentality, which is the life-continuum. This is because the kamma that produces this life has not yet been exhausted. Since there is materiality-mentality (*nāma-rūpa*) in the sensual and fine-material realms, and mentality in the immaterial realms, there is also a bhavaṅga there.

In the sensual realms (*kāmāvacara bhūmi*), the bhavaṅga may have as object a kamma, kamma sign (*kamma nimitta*) or rebirth sign (*gati nimitta*). For example, one being's bhavaṅga may have as object the Kyaikthiyo Pagoda, while another's may have as object the Shwedagon Pagoda:² these objects are concepts.

In the fine-material realm (*rūpāvacara bhūmi*), the bhavaṅga has as object only a kamma sign: no kamma and no rebirth sign. The bhavaṅga of one in a fine-material realm is called the fine-material resultant jhāna (*rūpāvacara vipāka jhāna*), because it is the result of the jhāna-attainment at death in the foregoing life. Since the object of the bhavaṅga is thus the same as the object of the jhāna attainment, the object of the bhavaṅga will depend upon the

jhāna. For example, the bhavaṅga of one who has reached a fine material realm due to ānāpāna-jhāna will have as object the ānāpāna-paññā-nimitta, while the one who is there due to mettā-jhāna will have as object all beings in the infinite universe: both these objects are concepts.

In the immaterial realms (*arūpāvacara bhūmi*), the bhavaṅga has as object only kamma or a kamma sign: no rebirth sign. For example, in the realm of the base of boundless space one's bhavaṅga will have as object boundless space, and in the realm of the base of nothingness, it will have as object the absence of the base-of-boundless-space consciousness: both these objects are concepts.

In the realm of the base of boundless consciousness, one's bhavaṅga will have as object the consciousness of the base of boundless space, and in the realm of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, it will have as object the consciousness of the Base of Nothingness: being consciousnesses, these objects are kamma.

When we say 'sensual realms', 'the fine-material realms' and 'the immaterial realms', we are referring to realms that exist, places that exist. But when we say 'supramundane realm' (*lokuttara bhūmi*), the word 'realm' is only a metaphor. It is, in fact, not a place at all. When we say 'supramundane realm' we mean only the four paths, four fruitions, and Nibbāna; not a place. Hence, there is no bhavaṅga in the supramundane realm. There is none in the four path- and four fruition-consciousnesses, and since there is no mentality-materiality (*nāmarūpa*) in Nibbāna, there is no men-

¹ The three realms: (1) The sensuous realm (*kāmāvacara*), which includes the human world, the animal-, ghost-, and asura worlds, the hells and the deva-worlds. (2) The fine-material realm (*rūpāvacara*), which includes the Brahma worlds, where the materiality is very subtle. (3) The immaterial realm (*arūpāvacara*), where there is only mentality.

² The two most famous pagodas in Myanmar.

tality for the bhavaṅga to maintain, which means there cannot be any bhavaṅga in Nibbāna.

Question 3.13 What is the difference between mundane jhānas (*lokiya jhāna*) and supramundane jhānas (*lokuttara jhāna*)?

Answer 3.13 The mundane jhānas are the four fine-material-sphere jhānas and four immaterial-sphere jhānas (*arūpāvacara jhāna*), that is, the eight attainments (*samāpatti*). The supramundane jhānas are the jhāna factors associated with the Path and Fruition Knowledges. When you discern the mental formations of, for example, the mundane fine-material-sphere first jhāna as impermanence, suffering or non-self, and if you see Nibbāna, your Path Knowledge is the first jhāna. This is a supramundane jhāna.

Why? In the mundane fine-material-sphere first jhāna, which was the object of Vipassanā, there are the five jhāna factors: applied thought, sustained thought, joy, bliss and one-pointedness. In the supramundane first jhāna there are the same five. This is how the path and fruition can be the first jhāna path, and first jhāna fruition. The other jhānas can in the same way be (the conditions for their respective) supramundane (jhānas).

Question 4.1 Is a bodhisatta, including Arimetteyya Bodhisatta, a worldling (*puthujjana*)? If Arimetteyya Bodhisatta is a worldling like us, then at the time for him to come down to become Metteyya Buddha, what is the difference between the conditions for him to become a Buddha and for us?¹

Answer 4.1 The difference is that his pāramīs have matured, as they had for our Sakyamuni Buddha as the bodhisatta Prince Siddhattha. Such bodhisattas will for many lives have been cultivating their pāramīs. There are ten pāramīs:

1. Generosity (*dāna*)
2. Virtue (*sīla*)
3. Renunciation (*nekkhamma*)
4. Wisdom (*paññā*)
5. Energy (*vīriya*)
6. Patience (*khanṭi*)
7. Truthfulness (*sacca*)
8. Resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*)
9. Lovingkindness (*mettā*)
10. Equanimity (*upekkhā*)

When these ten pāramīs are mature, they push the bodhisatta to renounce the world, even though he is enjoying sensual pleasures. In his last life, a bodhisatta marries and has a son; this is a law of

¹ The Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw's audience was almost only Buddhists of the Mahāyana tradition, for whom the goal is not arahantship but Buddhahood.

nature. We forget the names of Metteyya Bodhisatta's wife and son. According to the Theravāda Tipiṭaka, it is his last life, because no arahant, including The Buddha, is reborn after his Parinibbāna. His Parinibbāna is the end of his round of rebirths. He will not be reborn anywhere.¹

Take our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta: in his last life, before his enlightenment, he was a worldling. How? When he was sixteen years old, he became prince Siddhattha and married princess Yasodharā. They had a son. He enjoyed sensual pleasures for more than thirteen years. He did not have five hundred female deities on his left, and five hundred female deities on his right, but was surrounded by twenty thousand princesses. This is *kāmasukhallikanuyogo*: enjoyment of sensual pleasures, indulgence in sensual pleasures.

After he had renounced those sensual pleasures, he practised self-mortification in the Uruvela forest. After six years of that futile practice, he abandoned it, practised the middle way, and before long attained enlightenment. After His enlightenment, in His first sermon, the '*Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*', He declared:²

Kāmesu kāmasukhallikanuyogo

hīno, gammo, puthujjaniko, anariyo, anattasamhito.

(This enjoyment of sensual pleasures is inferior (*hīno*),

the practice of villagers (*gammo*), the practice of worldlings (*puthujjaniko*).

¹ Please see also The Buddha's words quoted below p. 222.

² S.V.XII.ii.1 'Dhamma-Wheel Rolling Sutta'

It is the practice of unenlightened ones (*anariyo*).

It is unbeneficial (*anattasamhito*).

This means that the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is not the practice of enlightened ones. And sensual pleasures are unbeneficial because although they provide mundane benefit such as human happiness, deva happiness and brahma happiness, they do not provide the supramundane benefit that is Nibbāna happiness, which can be enjoyed only by Path- and Fruition Knowledge.

So, in His first sermon The Buddha declared that anyone who enjoys sensual pleasures is a worldling. When he was still a bodhisatta, he too had enjoyed sensual pleasures, that is, with Yasodharā in the palace. At that time, he too was a worldling, because enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the practice of a worldling.

This is not only for our bodhisatta, but for every bodhisatta. There may be many bodhisattas here among the present audience. You should consider this carefully: are the bodhisattas here worldlings (*puthujjana*) or noble ones (*ariya*)? We think you may know the answer.

Question 4.2 After finishing the meditation course, can a yogi attain Path (*magga ñāṇa*) and Fruition Knowledges (*phala ñāṇa*) and? If not, why not?

Answer 4.2 Maybe he can; it depends on his pāramīs. Take, for example, the case of Bāhiya Dāruciriya.¹ He practised Samatha-

¹ Apadāna.II.liv.6 (&A.) '*Bāhiyatthera Apadāna*' (Bāhiyatthera's Heroic Deed')

Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*) in the time of Kassapa Buddha's dispensation. He had about twenty thousand years of practice, but did not attain any Path and Fruition Knowledges, because he had received a definite prophecy from Padumuttara Buddha. It was that he was to be the *khippābhiñña*, the quickest to attain arahantship in Sakyamuni's dispensation. Hence, his pāramīs would mature only then.¹ In the same way, other disciples (*sāvaka*), who attained the Four Analytical Knowledges (*paṭisambhidā ñāṇa*) in this Sakyamuni Buddha's dispensation, had also practised Samatha-Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations in the dispensation of previous Buddhas; this is a law of nature. The four analytical knowledges they attained are:

1. The analytical knowledge of meaning.....(*attha paṭisambhidā ñāṇa*)
The insight-knowledge of effect, which is the Noble Truth of Suffering.
2. The analytical knowledge of dhamma..... (*dhamma paṭisambhidā ñāṇa*)
The insight-knowledge of cause, which is the Noble Truth of the Cause for Suffering.
3. The analytical knowledge of enunciation of language(*nirutti paṭisambhidā ñāṇa*)
Knowledge of grammar, especially Pāli grammar.

¹ AA.IXIV.iii 'Bāhiya Dārucīriyattheravatthu' B216 (The Case of Bāhiya Dārucīriyatthera')

4. The analytical knowledge of the kinds of knowledge.....(*paṭibhāna paṭisambhidā ñāṇa*)
The insight-knowledge that knows the above three analytical knowledges.

There are five causes for attaining these four analytical knowledges:¹

1. Achievement..... (*adhigama*)
The attainment of the Arahant Path and Fruition, or any other Path and Fruition.
2. Mastery of scriptures (*pariyatti*)
Learning the Dhamma scriptures.
3. Hearing(*savana*)
Listening to Dhamma explanations attentively and respectfully.
4. Inquiry(*paripuccha*)
Discussing the difficult passages and explanations in the texts and commentaries.
5. Prior effort..... (*pubbayoga*)
The practice of Samatha-Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*) during the dispensations of former Buddhas.

If those who practise in this dispensation do not attain Nibbāna, it is because their pāramīs have not yet matured. The reason may also be that they have received a definite prophecy from a previous Buddha, or have made an aspiration to escape from the round

¹ Vs.xiv 'Paññāpabhedakathā' B429 ('How Many Kinds of Understanding Are There? [Ñ's title] Ñ28)

of rebirths (*samsāra*) in a future dispensation such as Arimetteyya Buddha's. For example, there were two thousand bhikkhunīs, all ordinary arahants, who attained Parinibbāna on the same day as Yasodharā. They had, during Dīpaṅkara Buddha's time, made an aspiration to escape from the round of rebirths (*samsāra*) in the dispensation of Sakyamuni Buddha, which would be four incalculables and one hundred thousand aeons later. To become an ordinary arahant does not require that one cultivate one's pāramīs for that long, but these two thousand bhikkhunis had remained in the round of rebirths for that long period because of their aspiration only, not because of a definite prophecy.

Question 4.3 A yogi who has finished the meditation course, but not yet attained the Path Knowledge (*maggāñāna*) and Fruition Knowledge (*phalañāna*), if his concentration drops, will his insight-knowledge also drop? Can he be reborn in a woeful state (*apāya*)?

Answer 4.3 Maybe his insight-knowledge will also drop, but it is very rare. If he does not practise for a long time, his Samatha-Vipassanā may slowly weaken. The force of kamma, however, remains as latent energy.

There is an example of this in the Pāli Texts.¹ It takes place in Sri Lanka. Some thirty bhikkhus and novices (*sāmaṇeras*) had paid homage at the Great Shrine at Kalyāṇī, and as they were coming down the forest track on to the main road, they saw a man coming in the opposite direction. He had been working in a charcoal

burner's field beside the road; his body was smeared with ashes, and the single yellow loin-cloth he wore hitched up was also smeared with ashes, so that he seemed like a charcoal stump. Having done his day's work, he had picked up a bundle of half-burnt wood and was coming along a by-path with his hair hanging down his back; and he stood facing the bhikkhus.

The novices, when they saw him, joked with each other, saying, 'That is your father, that is your grandfather, your uncle!' and laughed as they went along. Then they asked 'What is your name, lay follower?'. On being asked his name, the man was remorseful and, putting down his bundle of wood and arranging his clothes, he did obeisance to the Mahāthera in order to detain him for a while.

The bhikkhus waited, but the novices came up and laughed even in front of the Mahāthera. The man said to the Mahāthera: 'Bhante, you laugh on seeing me. You think you fulfill the bhikkhu's life just on account of your robes. But you have not attained so much as mental one-pointedness.

I was once a recluse like you, and I was mighty with the psychic powers and powerful in this dispensation. I treated the air like the earth and the earth like the air; I treated the far like the near and the near like the far. I penetrated in a moment the one hundred thousand worlds systems. You see my hands now? Now they are like the hands of a monkey.

Then pointing to a tree, he said further, 'Sitting under that tree I would touch with these very hands the moon and the sun. I would sit with the moon and the sun as the ground on which to rub these very feet. Such were my psychic powers, but they vanished

¹ VbhA.viii.1 'Suttantabhājanīyavaṇṇanā' ('By Sutta Comment')

through negligence. Do not be negligent. Through negligence people reach ruin such as this. But those who live strenuously make an end of birth, old age and death. Therefore, take me as an example, and do not neglect practising Samatha-Vipassanā wholesome dhammas. Be strenuous, Venerable Sirs.’

Thus, he admonished and warned them. Impelled by the urgency of his words, standing in that place, thirty Bhikkhus practised Samatha-Vipassana and attained Arahantship. So Samatha-Vipassana may drop temporarily because of negligence (*pamāda*), but the force of kamma remains.

There are four types of person who attain Nibbāna. The first type is a Paccekabuddha, which we shall not discuss. The remaining three types are: (1) a bodhisatta, (2) a chief disciple (*agga sāvaka*) or great disciple (*mahā sāvaka*), and (3) an ordinary disciple (*pakati sāvaka*).

1. Our **bodhisatta** had the eight attainments (*samāpatti*) and five mundane psychic powers during Dīpaṅkara Buddha’s time. He had in past lives also practised Samatha-Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*). Had he really wanted to attain Nibbāna, he could have attained it quickly, by listening to a short stanza by Dīpaṅkara Buddha about the Four Noble Truths. But he did not want only to attain Nibbāna, so he made an aspiration to be a Buddha in the future, after which he received a definite prophecy from Dīpaṅkara Buddha. During the four incalculables (*asaṅkhyeyya*) and one hundred thousand aeons (*kappa*) which followed, that is from Dīpaṅkara Buddha’s time to Kassapa Buddha’s time, our bodhisatta was

ordained as a bhikkhu in nine lives, each time under the guidance of a Buddha. In each life as a bhikkhu, our bodhisatta’s training included seven practices:¹

1. Study of the Three Piṭakas by recitation² (*tipiṭakam Buddhava canam uggamhitvā*)
2. Purification in the four types of morality³ (*catu pārisuddhi sīle supatiṭṭhāya*)
3. The thirteen ascetic practices (*terasa dhutaṅgāni samādāya*)
4. Always the forest-dweller ascetic practice⁴ (*araññam pavisitvā*)
5. The eight attainments (*aṭṭha samāpattiyo*)
6. The five mundane psychic powers (*pañca abhiññā*)
7. Vipassanā meditation up to Knowledge of Conformity⁵ (*vipassanam vaḍḍhatvā yāva anulomañānam*)

¹ MA.II.iv.1 ‘Ghaṭikāra Sutta’ (‘Ghaṭikāra Sutta’). This text lists only 1, 2, 3 and 4, with a fifth being: *gata-paccāgata-vattanā pūrayamānā samānadhmmaṃ karontā* (practising the ‘going & going-back duty recluse practice’), which refers to full-time meditation (Samatha and Vipassanā), also when going out for alms, and going back to the dwelling from alms. From sources that explain the Bodhisatta’s practice, this fifth one may be understood specifically to be 5, 6 & 7. In other contexts, however, *samaṇa dhamma* (recluse practices) refers to all these seven practices.

² This is *gantha dhura* (book burden/obligation), which is also called *pariyatti* (learning), and 2-7 are *Vipassanā dhura* (Insight burden/obligation), which is also called *paṭipatti* (practice). Please see above, p.xxi

³ For the four types of purification of morality, please see above Answer 2.3, p.92

⁴ Although the forest-dweller practice is included in the thirteen ascetic practices, the Commentary mentions it separately for reasons of emphasis.

⁵ This is the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*)

These pāramīs must be fulfilled for the attainment of Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbaññuta ñāṇa*). But before his pāramīs had matured, that is, from the time of his definite prophecy till his birth as Prince Siddhattha, our bodhisatta was sometimes reborn in the animal kingdom because of previous unwholesome kamma. The lives as a bhikkhu, and the lives as an animal, however, were very far apart. This is the nature of a bodhisatta.

2. Some chief disciples will also have received a definite prophecy; for example, the Venerables Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna had received one from Anomadassī Buddha. Also great disciples will sometimes have received a definite prophecy; the Venerables Kassapa and Ānanda had received one from Padumuttara Buddha. In our Buddha's time, all these disciples became arahants possessed of the Four Analytical Knowledges.¹ This type of arahants will also have been skilful in Samatha-Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*sañkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*), in times of many previous Buddhas; this is a law of nature. Even so, from the time of their definite prophecy till the time of our Buddha, some of them were sometimes reborn in one of the four woeful states, because of unwholesome kamma, sometimes together with our bodhisatta. This is the nature of a chief or great disciple.²

¹ For the Four Analytical Knowledges, please see above Answer 4.2, p.177

² Vs.xiv 'Paññāpabhedakathā' B429 ('How Many Kinds of Understanding Are There? [Ñ's title]' Ñ28)

3. As for ordinary disciples, if they have practised Samatha-Vipassanā thoroughly up to the Knowledge of Cause and Condition (*paccaya-pariggaha ñāṇa*) or the Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*), or the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*sañkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*), they will not be reborn in one of the four woeful realms (*apāya*) after death, even though they may not have attained Path and Fruition in this life. This is explained in the *Visuddhi Magga* as:

Laddhassāso laddhapatiṭṭho niyatagatiko cūḷasotāpanno nāma hoti

(**He has found relief in the Buddha's Dispensation,**

he has found a secure place, he has a sure, good destination,

so he is called a Lesser Stream-Enterer (*cūḷa sotāpanna*).)

Lesser Stream-Enterers may thus be reborn in the deva realm, and then there are four things that can happen. In the '*Sotānugata Sutta*', The Buddha taught which four:¹

1. If, as soon as he attains rebirth in the deva realm, the Lesser Stream-Enterer reflects on the Dhamma, it will be clear to his insight-knowledge, and he can attain Nibbāna quickly.
2. If he does not attain Nibbāna by reflecting on the Dhamma with insight-knowledge, he can attain Nibbāna by listening to a bhikkhu who has psychic powers, and has come to the deva realm to teach the Dhamma.

¹ A.IV.IV.v.1 '*Sotānugata Sutta*' ('One Who Has Heard Sutta'), mentioned also p.124, and p. 248

3. If he does not get the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma from a bhikkhu, he may get the opportunity to listen to it from Dhamma-teaching devas (*Dhamma-kathika deva*), like Sanañkumāra Brahmā, etc., and attain Nibbāna by listening to them.
4. If he does not get the chance to listen to the Dhamma from Dhamma-teaching devas, he may get the chance to meet friends who were fellow yogis in his past human life in a dispensation. Those fellow yogis may say, for example: 'Oh friend, please remember this and that Dhamma which we practised in the human world.' He may then remember the Dhamma, and if he practises Vipassanā, he can attain Nibbāna very quickly.

An example of a Lesser Stream-Enterer who was reborn in the deva realm, and who attained Nibbāna very quickly afterwards, is the Venerable Samaṇa-devaputta. He was a bhikkhu who practised Samatha-Vipassanā earnestly. He died while practising, and was reborn in the deva realm. He did not know he had died, and continued meditating in his mansion in the deva realm. When the female devas in his mansion saw him, they realized he must have been a bhikkhu in his previous life, so they put a mirror in front of him and made a noise. He opened his eyes, and saw his image in the mirror. He was very disappointed, because he did not want to be a deva; he wanted only Nibbāna.

So immediately he went down to The Buddha to listen to the Dhamma. The Buddha was teaching Dhamma about the Four Noble Truths. After listening to the Dhamma, Samaṇa-devaputta

attained the Stream-Entry Path Knowledge (*sotāpatti maggañāṇa*) and Stream-Entry Fruition Knowledge (*sotāpatti phalañāṇa*).¹

Thus, when an ordinary disciple practises Samatha and Vipassanā very hard, and even attains the Knowledge of Cause and Condition, the Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away, or the Knowledge of Equanimity towards Formations, although he may not attain a path and fruition in this life, the practice he has done does mean that he will very likely attain them in one of his future lives.

At the time of death, a yogi may not have strong Samatha or Vipassanā, but because of the powerful Samatha-Vipassanā meditation wholesome kamma, a good nimitta appears at his mind-door. Death may take place with that good nimitta as object, and because of this wholesome kamma, he will definitely reach a good place, and can in there attain Nibbāna.

If, however, he practises Vipassanā up to the moments of the near-death impulsion (*maraṇāsanna javana*), he will be of the first type of person mentioned in the '*Sotānugata Sutta*', which we just discussed.

Question 4.4 Can a yogi who has finished the course, but not yet attained Nibbāna, attain the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena (*dhammatṭhiti ñāṇa*)? If so, can it regress?

Answer 4.4 Yes, he can attain that knowledge.

¹ S.II.v.6 '*Accharū Sutta*' ('Deva Sutta') & SA.ibid.

Pubbe kho Susīma dhammaṭṭhitiññāṇaṃ pacchā nibbāne ñāṇaṃ.

(The Knowledge Standing on Phenomena (*dhammaṭṭhiti ñāṇa*) comes first, the Path Knowledge that takes Nibbāna as object comes next.)

This was The Buddha's explanation to Susīma.¹ Susīma was a wanderer (*paribbājaka*), who ordained to 'steal' the Dhamma. But The Buddha saw that he would attain Nibbāna within a few days, so He accepted him.

Susīma had heard that many arahants went to The Buddha and reported that they had attained arahantship. So Susīma asked them whether they had the eight attainments and five psychic powers. They answered 'No'. 'If you do not have the eight attainments and five psychic powers, how did you attain arahantship?' Then they answered '*Paññāvimuttā kho mayaṃ āvuso Susīma*': 'Oh, friend Susīma, we are free from defilements, and attained arahantship by the pure-Vipassanā vehicle (*suddha-vipassanā yānika*).'² He did not understand, so he asked The Buddha the same question. The Buddha said:

Pubbe kho Susīma dhammaṭṭhitiññāṇaṃ pacchā Nibbāne ñāṇaṃ.

(The Knowledge Standing on Phenomena comes first; the Path Knowledge that takes Nibbāna as object comes next.)

What does this mean? The Path Knowledge is not the result of the eight attainments and five psychic powers, it is the result of

¹ S.II.I.vii.10 '*Susīma Sutta*' ('Susīma Sutta')

insight-knowledges. So the Path Knowledge can occur only after the insight-knowledges have occurred. In the '*Susīma Sutta*', all insight-knowledges are referred to as the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena. The Knowledge Standing on Phenomena is the insight-knowledge of the impermanent, suffering and non-self nature of all formations, conditioned things (*saṅkhāra dhamma*), that is, mentality, materiality, and their causes. This is how the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena comes first, and the Path Knowledge that takes Nibbāna as object comes next.

Afterwards, The Buddha gave a Teaching on the Three Rounds¹ (*teparivaṭṭa Dhamma-desanā*), which is like the '*Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*' 'Non-self Characteristic Sutta'.² When the teaching was finished, Susīma attained arahantship, even though he did not have the eight attainments or five psychic powers. He too became a pure-Vipassanā-vehicle person. At that time he understood clearly the meaning of The Buddha's discourse.

If a yogi attains the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena, then although he does not attain Nibbāna in this life, his insight-knowledge will not decrease. His latent Vipassanā kammic force is still powerful. If he is an ordinary disciple, he may attain Nibbāna in his next life.

¹ Here, the three rounds refer to the three characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

² S.III.II.i.7, quoted 'Introduction' p.32

Question 4.5 Can one attain supramundane states with only access concentration?¹

Answer 4.5 Yes, one can. At access concentration there is also bright, brilliant and radiant light. With that light, one can discern the rūpa-kalāpas, ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality, and their causes. One can then continue with Vipassanā meditation stage by stage.

Question 4.6 Can one with only momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*), practise mindfulness of feeling (*vedānānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*) to attain supramundane states?¹

Answer 4.6 Here we need to define momentary concentration. What is momentary concentration? There are two types of momentary concentration:

1. Momentary concentration in Samatha meditation
2. Momentary concentration in Vipassanā meditation

In Samatha meditation there are three types of concentration:

1. Momentary concentration (a type of preparatory concentration)
2. Access concentration
3. Absorption concentration

The momentary concentration in Samatha refers in particular to the concentration that takes a paṭibhāga-nimitta as object, like the

ānāpānā paṭibhāga-nimitta. It is the concentration before access concentration. This is for a Samatha vehicle person (*samatha yānika*).

There is another type of momentary concentration for a pure-Vipassanā vehicle yogi (*suddha-vipassanā yānika*). A pure-Vipassanā-vehicle yogi must usually begin with four-elements meditation in order to attain access concentration or momentary concentration, and see the rūpa-kalāpas, and the four elements in one kalāpa. The *Visuddhi Magga* says that is access concentration. But the sub-commentary to the *Visuddhi Magga* says it is only a metaphor, not real access concentration, because real access concentration is close to jhāna concentration.

But jhāna cannot be attained with four-elements meditation. When one is able to see the four elements in individual rūpa-kalāpas there is deep concentration. Even so, one cannot attain jhāna using them as object. There are two reasons for this:

1. To see the four elements in individual rūpa-kalāpas is to see ultimate materiality (*paramattha rūpa*), and to see ultimate materiality is deep and profound. One cannot attain jhāna with ultimate reality as object.
2. One cannot concentrate deeply on the four elements in individual rūpa-kalāpas because the rūpa-kalāpas pass away as soon as they arise. That means the object is always changing. One cannot attain jhāna with an object that is always changing.

Thus, since four-elements meditation does not produce jhāna, we may understand that the access concentration which takes the

¹For a discussion of the different types of concentration, please see also 115

four elements in individual rūpa kalāpas as object is not real access concentration, but momentary concentration.

Then let us discuss the momentary concentration in Vipassanā. It is discussed in the section on *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) of the *Visuddhi Magga*.¹

Here you should know that Vipassanā momentary concentration is seeing thoroughly the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. Without seeing ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes, how can there be Vipassanā momentary concentration? It is impossible.

When a Samatha-vehicle yogi wants to practise Vipassanā, who has attained ānāpānā jhāna enters the first jhāna. This is Samatha. He emerges from it, and discerns the thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna, and then impermanence, suffering or non-self by seeing the arising and passing-away nature of those jhāna formations (*jhāna dhamma*). He does the same with the second jhāna, etc.

At the time of discerning there is still concentration. He concentrates on the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of those jhāna formations. His concentration is at that time deep and profound, and does not go to other objects. This is momentary concentration, because the object is momentary; as soon as it arises, it passes away.

In the same way, when a yogi is practising Vipassanā to see either the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of ultimate

mentality-materiality and their causes, then usually his mind does not leave the object. His mind has sunk into one of the characteristics. This is also called momentary concentration.

If a yogi can see ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes thoroughly and clearly, without having done any Samatha meditation, it is of course not necessary for him to practise Samatha meditation. If not, he should cultivate one of the Samatha meditation subjects, and develop sufficient concentration so as to be able to see ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes.

But in the '*Samādhi Sutta*' of the '*Khandha Saṃyutta*' The Buddha says:¹

Samādhim bhikkhave bhāvētha,

samāhito bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.

(Develop concentration, bhikkhus,

Having developed concentration, bhikkhus,

a bhikkhu understands dhammas as they really are (*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*.)

So, you should cultivate concentration to know the five aggregates, their causes and cessation; you should cultivate concentration to know their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Their cessation you will be able to see at the time of the arahant path and Parinibbāna.

¹ '*Samādhi Sutta*' ('Concentration Sutta') of the '*Khandha Saṃyutta*' ('Section on the Aggregates') S.III.1, quoted above, p.29.

¹ Vs.viii '*Ānāpānasati Kathā*' B235 ('Mindfulness-of-Breathing Explanation' Ñ232)

Also in the ‘*Samādhi Sutta*’ of the *Sacca Saṃyutta*, The Buddha says one should cultivate concentration, to know the Four Noble Truths.¹

Now, if a yogi wants to discern only feeling, he should be aware of the following facts explained by The Buddha:

*Sabbam, bhikkhave,
anabhijānam aparijānam avirājayam appajham abhabbo dukkhakkhayāya ...
Sabbāñca kho, bhikkhave,
abhijānam parijānam virājayam pajham bhabbo dukkhakkhayāya.*

**(Bhikkhus,
if a bhikkhu does not know all mentality, materiality, and their causes
with the three types of full-understanding (*pariññā*),
he cannot attain Nibbāna.
Only those, bhikkhus,
who know them with the three types of full understanding
can attain Nibbāna.)**

This is from the ‘*Aparijānana Sutta*’ in the ‘*Saḷāyatana Vagga*’ of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*.²

In the same way, The Buddha says in the ‘*Kūṭāgāra Sutta*’ of the ‘*Sacca Vagga*’ that, without knowing the Four Noble Truths

¹ ‘*Samādhi Sutta*’ (‘Concentration Sutta’) of the ‘*Sacca Saṃyutta*’ (‘Section on the Truths’) S.V.XII quoted above, p.14.

² S.IV.I.iii.4 ‘*Paṭhama-aparijānana Sutta*’ (‘First Non-Understanding Sutta’)

with insight-knowledge and Path Knowledge, one cannot reach the end of the round of rebirths (*samsāra*).¹ So if a yogi wants to attain Nibbāna, he must try to know all mentality, materiality, and their causes with the three types of full understanding.

What are the three types of full understanding? They are:

1. The Full Understanding as the Known(*ñāta pariññā*)
This is the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-Materiality (*nāma-rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa*), and Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition (*paccaya-pariggaha ñāṇa*). They are the insight-knowledges that know all ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes.
2. The Full Understanding as Investigation(*tīraṇa pariññā*)
This is the Knowledge of Comprehension (*sammasana ñāṇa*), and Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*). These two insight-knowledges comprehend clearly the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes.
3. The Full Understanding as Abandoning(*pahāna pariññā*)
This is the higher insight-knowledges from the Knowledge of Dissolution (*bhaṅga ñāṇa*) to the Path Knowledge (*magga ñāṇa*).

The teaching in those two suttas, the ‘*Aparijānana Sutta*’ and ‘*Kūṭāgāra Sutta*’, is very important. So, if a yogi wants to practise Vipassanā beginning with mindfulness of feeling, he should remember the following:

- He must have discerned ultimate materiality.

¹ S.V.XII.v.4 ‘*Pinnacled House Sutta*’, quoted ‘Introduction’ p.2

- Discerning feeling alone is not enough: he must also discern the mental formations associated with feeling in the six-door cognitive-processes.

Nevertheless, it is in fact possible to become enlightened by discerning only one dhamma, but that is only so long as all the other dhammas have been discerned before: either in this life or in a past life. Take for, example, the Venerable Sāriputta. When he heard the Venerable Assaji utter one sentence of Dhamma, he became a stream-enterer. Then he became a bhikkhu and practised meditation. In the '*Anupada Sutta*'¹ The Buddha describes how the Venerable Sāriputta was very skilled in discerning the individual mental formations of his jhāna attainments.² But even though the Venerable Sāriputta meditated hard, he did not attain arahantship.

Then one day, The Buddha taught the '*Dīghanakha Sutta*' to the Venerable Sāriputta's nephew, explaining one dhamma: feeling (*vedanā*).³ At this time, the Venerable Sāriputta was standing behind The Buddha fanning Him, and listening to the teaching. At the end of the teaching, the Venerable Sāriputta attained arahantship, and his nephew attained stream-entry. He attained arahantship by

¹ M.III.ii.1 '*Anupada Sutta*' ('One-by-one Sutta')

² For details about how to discern the individual mental formations of one's jhāna attainments, please see 'How You Discern Jhāna Cognitive-Processes', p.201

³ M.II.iii.4 '*Dīghanakha Sutta*' ('Dīghanakha Sutta')

reflecting on only one dhamma, but that was because he had meditated on all five aggregates beforehand.¹

We shall repeat: The Buddha said that if a bhikkhu does not know all mentality-materiality and their causes with the three types of full-understanding, he cannot attain Nibbāna. It is, therefore, not enough if a yogi tries to discern feeling alone, such as unpleasant feeling, and does not discern ultimate mentality-materiality thoroughly. Here 'it is not enough' means he will not attain Nibbāna.

Question 4.7 The Buddha was a great arahant. What was the difference between Him, and disciples like the Venerables Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna who were also arahants?

Answer 4.7 A Buddha's Arahant Path is always associated with Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbāññuta ñāṇa*), but the Arahant Path of disciples is not. The Arahant Path of disciples comprises the enlightenment (*bodhi*) of the three types of disciples:

1. Chief Disciple Enlightenment (*aggasāvaka bodhi*)
2. Great Disciple Enlightenment (*mahāsāvaka bodhi*)
3. Ordinary Disciple Enlightenment..... (*pakatisāvaka bodhi*)

The Arahant Path of disciples is sometimes associated with the Four Analytical Knowledges (*paṭisambhidā ñāṇa*);² sometimes with the

¹ For details regarding the past practice of those who attain, please see Answer 4.3, p.180, and Answer 5.2, p.219

² For the Four Analytical Knowledges, please see Answer 4.2, p.177

Six Direct Knowledges (*abhiññā*);¹ sometimes with the three Direct Knowledges (*tevijja*);² or is sometimes a pure Arahant Path: either Both Ways Liberated (*ubato bhāga vimutta*),³ or Wisdom Liberated (*paññā vimutta*).⁴ But it is never associated with Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbaññuta ñāṇa*). Thus, for example, the Venerables Sāriputta's and Mahāmoggallāna's Arahant Paths were not associated with Omniscient Knowledge. A Buddha's Arahant Path, on the other hand, is not only associated with Omniscient Knowledge, but also all the other knowledges, as well as all special qualities of a Buddha.

Another thing is that Buddhas have, because of their matured pāramīs, attained the Path, Fruition, and Omniscient Knowledges by themselves, without a teacher. But a disciple can only attain the Path and Fruition Knowledges by listening to Dhamma related to the Four Noble Truths from a Buddha, or a Buddha's disciple. They cannot practise by themselves, without a teacher. These are the differences.

Question 4.8 What is the 'intermediate life' (*antara bhava*)?

¹ (1) various kinds of supernormal power (*iddhi-vidhā*), (2) divine ear (*dibba sota*), (3) knowledge of the minds of others (*parassa ceto-pariyāñāṇa*), (4) divine eye (*dibba cakkhu*), (5) recollection of past lives (*pubbe nivāsānussati*), (6) destruction of the taints (*āsavakkhaya*).

² (4), (5), (6) of the Direct Knowledges just mentioned.

³ **Both Ways Liberated** (*ubato bhāga vimutta*): this refers to those who escape first from the material sphere with the attainment of the immaterial jhānas, and second, escape also from the immaterial sphere with the attainment of arahantship.

⁴ **Wisdom Liberated** (*paññā vimutta*): this refers to pure-insight arahants.

Answer 4.8 According to the Theravāda Piṭaka there is no such thing as an intermediate life (*antara bhava*). Between a death consciousness (*cuti citta*) and its subsequent rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi citta*), there are no consciousness moments, or anything resembling an intermediate life. If a person were to reach the deva world after death, then between his death-consciousness and the deva's rebirth-linking consciousness, there would be no consciousness moment or anything like an intermediate life. As soon as death takes place, the deva rebirth-linking consciousness arises. In the same way, if a person were to reach hell after death, then between his death-consciousness and the rebirth-linking consciousness in hell, there would be no such thing as an intermediate life. He would go to hell directly after death.

The idea of an intermediate life usually arises when someone dies, inhabits the peta world for a short time, and is then reborn as a human being again. He may think his peta life was something like an intermediate life, even though it was, in fact, nothing like an intermediate life. What really happened is this: after the human death-consciousness had passed, the peta rebirth-linking consciousness arose; after the peta death-consciousness had passed, a human rebirth-linking consciousness arose again. The person suffered in the peta world because of his unwholesome kamma. The kammic force of that unwholesome kamma finished after only a short time, and he took a human rebirth-linking consciousness again, because of wholesome kamma that had matured.

The short life in the peta world is mistaken for an intermediate life by those who cannot see the reality of the round of rebirths or

dependent-origination. If they could discern dependent-origination with insight-knowledge, then this misbelief would disappear. So we should like to suggest that you discern dependent-origination with your own insight-knowledge. Then the question about an intermediate life will disappear from your mind.

Question 4.9 Are the methods for *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) and four-elements meditation the same? Why must we practise four-elements meditation only after *ānāpānasati*?

Answer 4.9 No, the methods are not the same.

In Vipassanā you must discern materiality and mentality, and their causes, which is why there are two types of meditation: discernment of materiality and discernment of mentality.

When The Buddha taught discernment of materiality, he always taught four-elements meditation, either in brief or in detail. So if you want to discern materiality, you must practise according to The Buddha's instructions. It is better to practise four-elements meditation with deep concentration like the fourth *ānāpānā jhāna*, because it helps us see ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality, and their causes clearly.

But if you do not want to practise Samatha meditation like *ānāpānasati*, you can practise the four-elements meditation directly: no problem. We discussed this in a previous question.

Question 4.10 Could the Sayadaw please explain the light experienced in meditation scientifically?

Answer 4.10 What is the light seen in meditation? Every consciousness (*citta*), except rebirth-linking consciousnesses, which arises

dependent upon the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*) produces consciousness-produced materiality (*cittaja rūpa*), also called *rūpa-kalāpas*. One consciousness produces many consciousness-produced *rūpa-kalāpas*. Of the heart-base-dependent consciousnesses, Samatha meditation-consciousnesses (*samatha bhāvanā-citta*) and Vipassanā meditation-consciousnesses (*vipassanā bhāvanā-citta*) are very strong and powerful; they produce very many *rūpa-kalāpas*. When we analyse those *rūpa-kalāpas*, we see the eight types of materiality. They are: the earth-, water-, fire-, and wind-elements, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. The materiality of colour is bright. The more powerful the Samatha and Vipassanā meditation-consciousnesses are, the brighter is the colour. Since, *rūpa-kalāpās* arise simultaneously as well as successively, the colour of one *rūpa-kalāpa* and the colour of another *rūpa-kalāpa* arise closely together like in an electric bulb: that is why light appears.

Again, in each *rūpa-kalāpa* produced by Samatha and Vipassanā meditation-consciousnesses, there is the fire-element, which also produces many new *rūpa-kalāpas*. They are called temperature-produced materiality, because they are produced by the fire-element, which is temperature (*utu*). This occurs externally as well as internally. When we analyse these *rūpa-kalāpas* we see the same eight types of materiality: the earth-, water-, fire-, and wind-elements, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. Colour is again one of them. Because of the power of the Samatha and Vipassanā meditation-consciousnesses, that colour too is bright. So the brightness of one colour, and the brightness of another colour arise closely together, like in an electric bulb.

The light of consciousness-produced materiality and temperature-produced materiality appear simultaneously. Consciousness-produced colour-materiality arises internally only, but temperature-produced colour-materiality arises both internally and externally and spreads in all directions up to the whole world system or universe (*cakkavāla*) or farther, depending on the power of the Samatha and Vipassanā meditation-consciousnesses. A Buddha's Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-Materiality produces light in up to ten thousand world systems. The Venerable Anuruddha's divine-eye consciousness (*dibba-cakkhu citta*) produced light in up to one thousand world systems. Other disciples' insight-knowledge produces light going up to one league (*yojana*), two leagues, etc., in every direction depending on the power of their Samatha and Vipassanā meditation-consciousnesses.

Usually many yogis realize that this light is a group of rūpa-kalāpas, when they have reached the Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away. While practising Samatha meditation, they do not yet understand that it is a group of rūpa-kalāpas, because the rūpa-kalāpas are very subtle. It is not easy to understand, and see the rūpa-kalāpas when practising only Samatha meditation. If you want to know with certainty, you should try to acquire the Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away. That is the most scientific way to understand the light experienced in meditation.

Question 4.11 Can those who have discerned the thirty-two parts of the body see them in someone else, with their eyes open?

Answer 4.11 It depends. Beginners can with their eyes open see only the external parts. They can see the internal parts only with their

insight-knowledge eyes. If you want to know this scientifically, please try to see it yourself with your insight-knowledge.

A Mahāthera, however, may because of previous practice, be able to see another's skeleton with his eyes open, like the Venerable Mahā Tissa, who was an expert in skeleton meditation. He always practised internal skeleton meditation as repulsiveness up to the first jhāna, and then Vipassanā. He discerned mentality-materiality, their causes, and nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. This was his usual practice.

One day he went for alms (*piṇḍapāta*), from Anuradhapura to Mahāgāma village. On the way, he met a woman who tried to attract his attention with loud laughter. When he heard the sound, he looked her way, saw only her teeth, and then used them for skeleton meditation. Because of his previous constant practice he saw her as a skeleton, and not as a woman. He saw only a skeleton. Then he concentrated on his own skeleton, attained the first jhāna, and practised Vipassanā quickly. He attained the arahant path standing in the road.

The woman had quarrelled with her husband, and had left home to go to her parents' house. Her husband followed her, and also met Mahā Tissa Mahāthera. He asked him, 'Bhante, did you see a woman go this way?' The Mahāthera answered, 'Oh, lay-supporter (*dāyaka*), I saw neither man nor woman, I saw only a skeleton going this way.' This story is mentioned in the *Visuddhi Magga* in the Morality Chapter.¹

¹ Vs.i 'Indriyasamvarasīlam' B15 ('Sense Restraint Morality' Ñ55)

This is an example of how someone who has, like Mahā Tissa Mahāthera, practised skeleton meditation thoroughly may be able to see another's skeleton with his eyes open.

Questions and Answers 5

Question 5.1 The eight attainments (*samāpatti*)¹ make it possible to attain the Knowledge of Analysing Mentality-Materiality (*nāma-rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa*), and to see their subtle arising and passing-away, so as to become disgusted with them, and attain the Path Knowledge (*maggañāṇa*). Are there, apart from this, other benefits to the eight attainments?

Answer 5.1 There are five benefits to jhāna concentration:²

The first benefit of jhāna concentration is a blissful abiding here and now (*ditṭhadhamma sukha vihāra*): enjoying jhāna happiness in this very life. This refers to arahants. Even though pure Vipassanā arahants naturally possess the supramundane jhānas (*lokuttāra jhāna*), they may still want to develop the mundane jhānas (*lokiya jhāna*), because they want to enjoy the blissful abiding of jhāna. Since they are arahants, with all defilements removed by Path Knowledge (which means also their hindrances have been removed³), it is very easy for them to develop jhāna. Another reason why they will usually develop jhāna is that they want to attain cessation (*nirodhānisamsa*): it requires mastery of the eight attainments.

A bhikkhu's duty is to learn the scriptures (*pariyatti*), to practise Vipassanā meditation (*paṭipatti*), and to attain the four paths and

¹ The four mundane jhānas, and four immaterial jhānas.

² Vis.xi 'Samādhi Niddesa' B362 ('Description of Concentration' Ñ120ff)

³ The hindrances are removed already at the attainment of Non-Return (*anāgāmi*).

four fruitions (*paṭivedha*). That is what arahants have done, so there is no more work for them to do. They practise jhāna concentration for no reason other than the enjoyment of jhāna bliss (*jhāna sukha*) in this very life.

The second benefit of jhāna concentration is the benefit of insight (*vipassanānisamsa*): Jhāna concentration is a support for insight-knowledge, because with jhāna, one can see ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes clearly, and can discern their impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature.

When a yogi has practised Vipassanā thoroughly, especially up to the Path Knowledge (*maggañāna*) and Fruition Knowledge (*phalañāna*), or the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupakkhā ñāna*), jhānas are usually stable. They make the insight-knowledge clear, bright, strong and powerful. That strong and powerful insight-knowledge in its turn, also protects the jhānas from falling down.

Then again, when a yogi has been practising Vipassanā for a long time, tiredness may occur. Then he should go into jhāna for long, to rest the mind. Refreshed he can then switch back to Vipassanā. When it happens again he can again rest in jhāna.¹

So, because of concentration, Vipassanā is clear, bright, strong and powerful, and well protected. Vipassanā in its turn destroys the defilements that hinder concentration, and keeps it stable. Samatha protects Vipassanā and vice-versa.

¹ For a more detailed explanation, please see p.151

Furthermore, the concentration of the eight attainments is not only a support for the discernment of mentality-materiality and their causes, because those eight attainments are themselves mentality, and included in the discernment of mentality.¹ And if a yogi has discerned mentality-materiality and their causes (including the eight attainments) as impermanence, suffering, and non-self, up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupakkhā ñāna*), he can thereafter keep his discernment of the jhāna formations to only one of the eight attainments. This is yoking (*yuganaddha*) Samatha and Vipassanā together, like two bullocks pulling one cart. It is another support for the attainment of the Path, Fruition, and Nibbāna.

The third benefit of jhāna concentration is psychic powers (*abhiññānisamsa*): If one wants to master the mundane psychic powers, like the recollection of past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati abhiññā*), the divine eye (*dibba cakkhu*), the divine ear (*dibba sota*), knowing the mind of others (*paracitta vijānana*), and the supernormal powers (*iddhividha*), flying, walking on water, etc., one must develop the ten kasiṇas and eight attainments (*samāpatti*) in fourteen ways.²

The fourth benefit of jhāna concentration is what is called 'a specific existence' (*bhavavisesāvahānisamsa*). That is, if one wants re-birth in a brahma realm at death, one must develop concentration such as the ten kasiṇa-, ānāpānā-, or lovingkindness-jhāna. But to

¹ Please see p.201ff

² For details, please see Vs.xii 'Iddhividha Niddesa' ('Description of Direct Knowledge')

be sure of rebirth in a brahma realm means the jhāna must be maintained up to the moment of death.

The fifth benefit of jhāna concentration is cessation (*nirodhāni-samsa*): the attainment of cessation (*nirodha samāpatti*), which is the temporary cessation of consciousness (*citta*), associated mental factors (*cetasika*) and consciousness-produced materiality (*cittaja rūpa*). ‘Temporary’ means usually for a day up to seven days, depending on one’s prior determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*).

Only non-returners (*anāgāmi*) and arahants can attain cessation. And for arahants, apart from when they are asleep, and apart from when they pay attention to concepts, they never stop seeing the arising and passing-away, or just the passing-away of mentality-materiality and their causes: all day, all night, for days, months, and years.¹ Sometimes they get disenchanted and ‘bored’, and just do not want to see those ‘phenomena of passing-away’ (*bhaṅga dhamma*) anymore. But, because their life span is not over, it is not yet time for their Parinibbāna. Therefore, to stop seeing those phenomena of passing-away, they enter cessation.

Why do they never stop seeing those phenomena? Because, with arahantship, they have destroyed the hindrances opposite the jhāna factors, and have therefore concentration. The concentrated mind sees ultimate phenomena (*paramattha dhamma*) as they really are, so it sees always ultimate mentality-materiality as they really

¹ For related details, please see below, ‘Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away’ p.264ff.

Details regarding the path to arahantship, and thence the arahant’s ‘permanent dwelling’ (seeing only the continuous rising and passing-away of formations) are described by The Buddha in S.III.II.i.5 ‘Sattatṭhāna Sutta’ (‘Seven Cases Sutta’).

are, which are the ‘phenomena of passing-away’. When one enters cessation, let’s say for seven days, one does not see the phenomena of passing-away, because (for as long as the attainment lasts) the consciousness and associated mental factors that would have known those phenomena have ceased.

Although arahants are able to abide in Nibbāna-attainment, they may still prefer to abide in cessation, because although the Nibbāna-attainment takes the Unformed as object, there remains the mental formation of feeling. But in the attainment of cessation the only formation that remains is the material formation of kamma-, temperature- and nutriment-produced materiality: no consciousness-produced materiality, and no consciousness.

To enter cessation, one must establish the first jhāna, emerge from it, and discern the first-jhāna dhammas as impermanence, suffering, or non-self. One must do the same progressively up to the base of boundless consciousness, which is the second immaterial jhāna (*viññāṇañcāyatana jhāna*). Then one must enter the base of nothingness, the third immaterial jhāna (*ākāṅkacchāyatana jhāna*), emerge from it and make four determinations:

1. To reflect on the limit of one’s life-span, and then within that to determine a period for the attainment of cessation (for example, seven days), at the end of which one will emerge from the attainment.
2. To emerge from the attainment of cessation should one be wanted by a Buddha.
3. To emerge from the attainment of cessation should one be wanted by the Saṅgha.
4. That one’s requisites not be destroyed by, for example, fire.

Then one enters the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the fourth immaterial jhāna (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana jhāna*). After only one or two consciousness-moments in that attainment, one enters cessation for the determined period, for example, seven days. One does not see anything while in the attainment, because all consciousness and associated mental factors have ceased.¹

Question 5.2 Which is easiest and quickest for the attainment of Nibbāna: using theory to perceive impermanence, suffering, and non-self, or using concentration to discern ultimate phenomena (*paramattha dhamma*)?

Answer 5.2 What is impermanence? Impermanence is the five aggregates.² This definition is mentioned in many commentaries. If a yogi sees the five aggregates clearly, he can see impermanence, suffering, and non-self: no problem. But without seeing the five aggregates, how can he see impermanence, suffering and non-self? If he tries to do so without seeing the five aggregates, his Vipassanā will be only reciting Vipassanā; not true Vipassanā. Only true Vipassanā produces the Path and Fruition Knowledges.

What are the five aggregates? They are the materiality-aggregate, the feeling-aggregate, the perception-aggregate, the formations-aggregate and the consciousness-aggregate. The materiality-aggregate is the twenty-eight types of materiality (*rūpa*). The feeling-, perception- and formations-aggregate are the fifty-two asso-

ciated mental factors (*cetasika*). The consciousness-aggregate is the eighty-nine types of consciousness (*citta*). The twenty-eight types of materiality are what is called materiality, and the fifty-two associated mental factors and eighty-nine types of consciousness are what is called mentality. So, the five aggregates and mentality-materiality are one and the same thing.

These are all ultimate mentality-materiality. If a yogi sees these ultimate mentality-materiality, he can practise Vipassanā, and see the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of these mentality-materiality. But if he cannot see ultimate mentality-materiality, how can he practise Vipassanā, since they and their causes are the necessary objects of insight-knowledge? This is true Vipassanā. Only true Vipassanā produces the Path and Fruition Knowledges.

In the '*Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta*'¹ The Buddha taught that to attain Nibbāna there is only one way (*ekāyana*): no other way. What is the way? The Buddha said to practise concentration first, because a concentrated mind can give rise to the seeing of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. Again, a concentrated mind can give rise to the seeing of impermanence, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. But we cannot say which is the quickest way to attain Nibbāna: it depends on one's pāramīs.

For example, the Venerable Sāriputta needed about two weeks' hard work to attain the arahant path and fruition, whereas the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna needed only seven days. And, Bāhi-

¹ Vs.xxiii '*Nirodhasamāpatti Kathā*' B879 ('Cessation-Attainment Explanation' Ñ43)

² *Aniccanti khandapañcakam...* *Pañcakkhandhā aniccanti*. (VbhA.ii.1 '*Suttantabhājanīya Vaṇṇanā*' ('By Sutta Comment')). Quoted also above Answer 2.3, p.92

¹ D.ii.9 'Great Sutta on the Foundations of Mindfulness'

ya Daruciriya needed only to listen to a very short discourse: *‘Dīṭṭhe dīṭṭhamattam...’* (In the seeing there is only the seeing.)¹ The speed with which they each attained arahantship was because of their individual pāramīs.

The Venerables Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna had developed their pāramīs for one incalculable (*asaṅkhyeyya*) and a hundred thousand aeons (*kappa*), and Bāhiya Daruciriya for about one hundred thousand aeons. The Venerables Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallānas’ arahant paths were associated with the Knowledge of Enlightenment of a Chief Disciple (*aggasāvaka bodhi ñāṇa*), whereas Bāhiya Daruciriya’s arahant path was associated with only the Knowledge of Enlightenment of a Great Disciple (*mahāsāvaka bodhi ñāṇa*). The Knowledge of Enlightenment of a Chief Disciple is higher than the Knowledge of Enlightenment of a Great Disciple.²

Since there is only one way to attain Nibbāna, these disciples did not attain arahantship because of a wish: they attained arahantship through present effort supported by their past effort, their pāramīs.

Question 5.3 The round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) is without beginning or end. Beings are also infinite in number, so those who have been our mother are infinite too. How can we develop lovingkindness by contemplating that all beings have been our mother? Can we

¹ U.1.10 ‘*Bāhiya Sutta*’ (‘*Bāhiya Sutta*’)

² For the four types of person who attains Nibbāna, please see p.180; for the four types of arahant path, please see Answer 4.7, p.192.

attain lovingkindness jhāna (*mettā jhāna*) by contemplating that all beings have been our mother?

Answer 5.3 Lovingkindness meditation does not concern the past and future. It concerns only the present. Only an object of the present can produce lovingkindness jhāna (*mettā jhāna*), not one of the past or future: we cannot attain jhāna by extending lovingkindness to the dead. In the endless round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), there may very well be no one who has not been our father or mother, but lovingkindness meditation is not concerned with the endless round of rebirths. It is not necessary to consider that this was our mother, this our father.

In the ‘*Karaṇīyamettā Sutta*’, The Buddha said:

Mātā yathā niyaṇṇiputtamāyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe;

evampi sabbabhūtesu, mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam.

This means that just as a mother with an only son would give up even her life for him, so a bhikkhu should extend lovingkindness to all beings. This is The Buddha’s instruction. But the attitude of a mother cannot alone lead to jhāna. If we extend lovingkindness with the thought, ‘May this person be well and happy’ it will produce jhāna.

Question 5.4 (The following questions are all covered by the same answer.)

- Was there a bodhisatta during The Buddha’s time? If so, did he attain a path or was he just a worldling (*puthujjana*)?
- Why can a noble one (*ariya*) not become a bodhisatta?

- Can a disciple (*sāvaka*) change to become a bodhisatta? If not, why not?
- When by following the Sayadaw's teaching one is able to attain the Path and Fruition Knowledges of Stream-Entry (*sotāpatti maggañāna* and *sotāpatti phalañāna*), can one choose to not do so, because of a desire and vow to practise the bodhisatta path?

Answer 5.4 One can change one's mind before attaining a path or fruition, but not afterwards. In many suttas, The Buddha taught that the path occurs according to a law of nature (*sammatta niyāma*).

The law of nature says:

- The Stream-Entry Path (*sotāpatti magga*) produces the Stream-Entry Fruition (*sotāpatti phala*), after which one can progress to the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*) stage, but one cannot regress to the worldling (*puṭhujjana*) stage.
- A once-returner can progress to the non-returner (*anāgāmi*) stage, but cannot regress to the stream-enterer or worldling stages.
- A non-returner can progress to arahantship, but cannot regress to the once-returner, stream-enterer or worldling stages.
- An arahant attains Parinibbāna at death, and cannot regress to the lower noble stages, the worldling stage, or any other stage.

Arahantship is the end. This is a law of nature (*sammatta niyāma*).

Referring to arahantship, The Buddha said many times:¹

Ayamantimā jāti, natthidāni punabbhavoti.

¹ For example, D.iii.6 'Pāsādika Sutta' ('Delightful Sutta')

(This is the last rebirth, now there is no new rebirth.)

This means that one cannot change one's mind, and decide to become a bodhisatta after having attained a path or fruition. Moreover, one cannot change one's mind after having received a definite prophecy from a Buddha or arahant. But one may wish to wait, and become an arahant some time in the future, and then change one's mind, and attain arahantship in this life.

The *Visuddhi Magga* gives an example of a Mahāthera, the Venerable Mahāsaṅgharakkhita, who did this.¹ He was expert in the four foundations of mindfulness, had practised Samatha-Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations, and had never performed a bodily or verbal action without mindfulness. And he had developed sufficient Samatha-Vipassanā pāramīs to be able to attain arahantship if he wanted to. But, because he wanted to see Arimetteyya Buddha, he had decided to wait, and become an arahant only in that dispensation. According to the law of nature we just mentioned, he would not be able to see Arimetteyya Buddha, if he attained arahantship now.

But, at the time near his death, a large number of people gathered, because they thought he was an arahant, and thought he was going to attain Parinibbāna, although he was in fact still a worldling. When his disciple told him many people had gathered, because they thought he was going to attain Parinibbāna, the

¹ Vs.i 'Paṭhamasilapañcakam' B20 ('First Morality Pentad' Ñ135)

Mahāthera said, ‘Oh, I had wanted to see Arimetteyya Buddha. But if there is a large assembly, then let me meditate.’ And he practised Vipassanā. Now that he had changed his mind, and because he had in his past lives not received a definite prophecy, he very soon attained arahantship.

During The Buddha’s time there was no mention of a definite prophecy to a bodhisatta except for Arimetteyya Bodhisatta, who was a bhikkhu named Ajita. The Tipiṭaka does not say either when the next Buddha after Arimetteyya Buddha will arise, so we cannot say how many bodhisattas there were during The Buddha’s time.

Question 5.5 Is it possible to practise the path to liberation (*vimuttimagga*) and the path of bodhisatta [path to Buddhahood]¹ at the same time? If so, what is the method?

Answer 5.5 Liberation (*vimutti*) means escape from defilements or the round of rebirths. When a bodhisatta becomes a Buddha, he escapes from the round of rebirths at his Parinibbāna. If you, as a disciple (*sāvaka*), try to attain arahantship and succeed, you will also escape from the round of rebirths at your Parinibbāna. A person cannot become a Buddha as well as a disciple. He must choose either one or the other, but they both escape from the round of rebirths when they attain arahantship. The way to attain the arahant path is the final path to liberation (*vimuttimagga*).

¹The Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw’s audience was almost only Buddhists of the Mahāyana tradition, for whom the path is not towards arahantship (liberation) but the bodhisatta path towards Buddhahood (saving all beings).

Question 5.6 Is this method [of meditation] for liberation only, or is it also for the bodhisatta path?

Answer 5.6 It is for both. In a previous talk, we mentioned that Sakyamuni Buddha was a bhikkhu in nine of his past lives as a bodhisatta.¹ If we look at his practice in those nine lives, we see the three trainings: morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The bodhisatta was able to practise the eight attainments, five mundane psychic powers, and Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations.

Now you too are developing Samatha-Vipassanā meditation based on virtuous conduct. When you have practised the three trainings up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations, you can choose either way. If you want liberation you can choose to go to Nibbāna; if you want to become a bodhisatta you can choose the bodhisatta way: no problem.

Question 5.7 Do all the good and bad karmas of an arahant mature prior to his Parinibbāna?

Answer 5.7 Not all. Some good and bad kamma may mature and produce their results. If they do not mature they do not produce a result, and are lapsed kamma (*ahosi kamma*), kamma that no longer bear any fruit. For example, the unwholesome kamma of one of the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna’s past lives produced its results just before his Parinibbāna. In one of his past lives he had tried unsuccessfully to kill his blind parents. Due to that unwholesome

¹Please see p.181

kamma, he suffered in hell for many thousands of years, and when he escaped from hell, he was killed in about two hundred lives. In each of those lives his skull was crushed. In his last life too, every bone in his body was crushed, including his skull. Why? The unwholesome kamma had matured. Unless unwholesome and wholesome kammas have matured, they do not produce any results. They are kamma by name only.

Question 5.8 After His enlightenment, did The Buddha say, ‘Originally all beings have the Tathāgata’s wisdom and other qualities’?

Answer 5.8 Now you have accepted that Sakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment. You should consider whether the Tathāgata’s qualities of enlightenment are present in all beings, especially in yourself. Do you possess any of the Tathāgata’s qualities?

Question 5.9 Is the arahant’s perception of voidness (*suññatā*) in his own five aggregates the same as his perception of voidness in outside inanimate things? Is Nibbāna the same as entering voidness?

Answer 5.9 The perception of voidness in one’s five aggregates and in outside inanimate things is the same.

Nibbāna was given the name voidness (*suññatā*) because of the path. When a yogi knows formations (*saṅkhāra dhamma*) as non-self, and if at that time he sees Nibbāna, his Path Knowledge is called the void liberation (*suññatā vimokkha*). Just like the path is called the void liberation, so is the object of the path, which is Nibbāna, al-

so called voidness. Here the void liberation means the escape from defilements by seeing the non-self nature of formations.¹

Question 5.10 Are all suttas taught by The Buddha only?

Answer 5.10 Most of the suttas in the Tipiṭaka are taught by The Buddha. A few suttas are said to be taught by disciples like the Venerable Sāriputta, the Venerable Mahākaccāyana, and the Venerable Ānanda. But the suttas taught by disciples have the same meaning as had they been taught by The Buddha. This is evident when The Buddha in some of the suttas gives his approval by uttering, **It is good** (*sādhū*), for example, in the ‘*Mahākaccāyana Bhaddekaratta Sutta*’, of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.²

Question 5.11 Since we cannot see The Buddha while in concentration, can we see Him by psychic powers to discuss Dhamma with Him?³

Answer 5.11 No, you cannot. One of the psychic powers is called recollection of past lives (*pubbenivasānussati*). If a yogi possesses this psychic power, and met a Buddha in one of his past lives, he can see that as a past experience only, not as a new experience. If Dhamma was discussed, there will be only old questions and answers; there cannot be new questions and answers.

¹ Further to Nibbāna as the perception of voidness, please see also p.33, and the three entrances to Nibbāna, p.69

² M.III.iv.3 ‘*Mahākaccāyana-Bhaddekaratta Sutta*’ (‘Mahākaccāyana One-Good-Attachment Sutta’)

³ Please see further the end of ‘Recollection of The Buddha’, p.110.

Questions and Answers 6

Question 6.1 How should a yogi who practises *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), but who cannot see a nimitta, check himself physically and mentally, so that he can improve and enter jhāna? In other words, what are the conditions needed to have a nimitta?

Answer 6.1 Constant practice is necessary in all types of meditation. In *ānāpānasati* you should be mindful of the breath in every bodily posture, and be so with respect. Walking, standing or sitting, take no objects apart from the breath: you should watch only the breath. Try to stop thinking; try to stop talking. If you try continuously in this way, your concentration will slowly improve. Only deep, strong and powerful concentration can produce a nimitta. Without a nimitta, especially the paṭibhāga-nimitta, one cannot attain jhāna, because the ānāpānā jhāna's object is the ānāpānā paṭibhāga-nimitta.

Question 6.2 Does the sitting posture affect the ability for beginners to concentrate, and enter jhāna? There are many yogis who sit on a small stool to meditate; can they enter jhāna?

Answer 6.2 The sitting posture is best for beginners. But those who have enough pāramīs in *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) can enter jhāna in any posture. A skilled yogi too can enter jhāna in any posture. So they can go into jhāna sitting on a stool or chair.

The Venerable Sāriputta and the Venerable Subhūti are examples of this. The Venerable Sāriputta was expert in the attainment

of cessation (*nirodha samāpatti*).¹ When he went for alms in the village, he always entered the attainment of cessation at every house, before accepting their offerings. He accepted the offerings only after having emerged from the attainment of cessation. That was his nature.

The Venerable Subhūti was expert in lovingkindness meditation. He entered the lovingkindness jhāna also at every house before accepting the offerings. After emerging from the lovingkindness jhāna he accepted the offerings. Why did they do this? They wanted the donor to get the maximum benefit. They knew that if they did this, immeasurable and superior wholesome kamma would occur in the donor's cognitive-process. They had such lovingkindness for the donors to want to do this. Thus they were able to enter an attainment while in the standing posture. You should think about ānāpānā jhāna in the same way.

Question 6.3 What is the object of the fourth ānāpānā jhāna? If there is no breath in the fourth jhāna, how can there be a nimitta?

Answer 6.3 There is still a paṭibhāga-nimitta in the fourth ānāpānā jhāna, although there is no in-and-out-breath. That ānāpānā paṭibhāga-nimitta arose from the ordinary, natural breath. This is why the object is still the in-and-out-breath (*assāsa-passāsa*). It is explained in the *Visuddhi Magga* sub-commentary.²

¹ For details regarding this attainment, please see p.217

² In this case, the ānāpānā-nimitta which arises depending on the ordinary, natural breath is also said to be as *assāsa-passāsa* (in-and-out breath). (*Assāsa-passāsa nissāya uppannamittampettha*
Please see further next page

Question 6.4 Can one enter an immaterial jhāna attainment (*arūpa jhāna samāpatti*), or practise lovingkindness meditation directly from *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing)?

Answer 6.4 One cannot enter an immaterial jhāna attainment directly from the fourth ānāpānā jhāna. Why not? Immaterial jhānas, especially the base of boundless-space jhāna (*ākāśānañcāyatana jhāna*), are attained by removing a kasiṇa object. After removing the kasiṇa object and concentrating on the space (*ākāsa*) left behind, the object of the base of boundless-space jhāna will appear. When one sees the space, one must extend it gradually, and when it extends in every direction, the kasiṇa object will have disappeared. One must extend the space further out to the boundless universe. That is the object of the base of boundless-space jhāna, which in its turn is the object of the base of boundless consciousness jhāna (*viññāṇañcāyatana jhāna*). The absence of the base of boundless-space jhāna is the object of the base of nothingness jhāna (*ākīñcaññāyatana jhāna*), which is finally the object of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception jhāna (*neva-saññā-nā-saññāyatana jhāna*). So the four immaterial jhānas are based on a fourth kasiṇa jhāna, and its object. Without removing the kasiṇa one cannot go to the immaterial jhānas. So if a yogi practises *ānāpānasati* up to the fourth jhāna, and then wants to go to immaterial jhānas, he should first

assāsa-passāsa sāmāññameva vuttam.) (VsTi.viii 'Ānāpānasati Kathā B215' 'Mindfulness-of-Breathing Explanation').

practise the ten kasiṇas up to the fourth jhāna. Only then can he go on to the immaterial jhāna.¹

If he wants to practise lovingkindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*) from the fourth ānāpānā jhāna he can do so; no problem. He must see the person who is the object of lovingkindness with the light of the fourth ānāpānā jhāna. If his light is not strong enough it may be a little bit problematic. But that is exceptional. If after the fourth kasiṇa jhāna, especially the fourth white kasiṇa jhāna, he practises lovingkindness he may succeed quickly. That is why we teach white kasiṇa meditation before lovingkindness meditation.²

Question 6.5 How can one decide when to die, that is, choose the time of one's death?

Answer 6.5 If you have practised *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) up to the arahant path, you can know the exact time of your Parinibbāna. The *Visuddhi Magga* mentions a Mahāthera who attained Parinibbāna while walking.³ First he drew a line on his walking path, and then told his fellow-bhikkhus that he would attain Parinibbāna when reaching that line, and it happened exactly as he had said. Those who are not arahants can also know their life span if they have practised dependent-origination (*paṭiccasam-uppāda*), the relationship between causes and effects of the past, present and future, but not exactly like the Mahāthera just men-

¹ For details regarding how you develop the immaterial jhānas, please see p.79ff

² For details in this regard, please see Answer 2.2, p.90

³ Vs.viii 'Ānāpānasati Kathā B238' 'Mindfulness-of-Breathing Explanation' Ṅ244

tioned. They do not know the exact time, maybe only the period in which they will die.

But these people do not die and attain Parinibbāna according to their own wish: it is according to the law of kamma. There is a stanza uttered by the Venerable Sāriputta:¹

Nābhinandāmi jīvitaṃ, nābhinandāmi maraṇaṃ;

kālaṃ ca paṭikankhāmi, nibbisam bhatako yathā.

(I do not love life, I do not love death;

I await the time of Parinibbāna, like a government servant who waits for pay-day.)

To die when one has desired to do so is called ‘death by desire’ (*adhimutti maraṇa*). This can usually be done by matured bodhisattas only. Why do they do so? When they are reborn in the celestial realms, where there is no opportunity to develop their pāramīs, they do not want to waste time, so sometimes they decide to die, and take rebirth in the human world, to develop their pāramīs.

Question 6.6 If one day we were to die in an accident, for example in an air crash, could our mind at that time ‘leave’ so that we would not have any bodily pain? How? Can one, depending on the power of one’s meditation, be without fear at that time, and be liberated? What degree of concentration is required?

Answer 6.6 The degree of concentration required is that of the psychic power of supernormal powers (*iddhividha abhiññā*). With those powers you can escape from danger, but not if you have a ma-

tured unwholesome kamma ready to produce its result. You should remember the case of Venerable Mahāmoggallāna. He was expert in psychic powers, but on the day when his unwholesome kamma matured he could not enter jhāna. This was not because of defilements or hindrances: it was only because of his matured unwholesome kamma. That is why the bandits were able to crush his bones to the size of rice grains.¹ Thinking he was dead, the bandits left, and only then could he enter jhāna again, and regain his psychic powers. He made a determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) that his body should become whole again, and then went to request The Buddha for permission to attain Parinibbāna. Then he returned to his Kalasīla Monastery, and attained Parinibbāna there. His matured unwholesome kamma first produced its result, after which it lost its power, and only then could he regain his psychic powers.

Thus, if you have no unwholesome kamma about to mature, and have psychic powers, you can escape from an air crash. But ordinary jhāna concentration and insight-knowledge, cannot save you from such danger. We can in fact say that the reason why one meets with this type of accident in the first place may be that one’s unwholesome kamma is about to mature.

The mind cannot leave the body, because the mind arises dependent upon one of the six-bases. The six-bases are the eye-base, the ear-base, the nose-base, the tongue-base, the body-base and the heart-base. These six bases are in your body. A mind cannot

¹ *Theragāthā*.XVII.2 (v.1002) ‘Sāriputtattheragāthā’ (‘Venerable Sāriputta Verses’):

¹ For details, please see 224

arise in this human world without a base. That is why the mind cannot leave the body.¹

We can, however, suggest that if you have jhāna, you should at the time of danger quickly enter jhāna. That means you need to have fully developed the mastery of entering jhāna. If you enter jhāna at the time of danger, then that wholesome kamma may save you, but we cannot say for sure. If you are in jhāna at the moment of death, you may go up to one of the brahma realms.

If you are skilled at Vipassanā, then you should practise it at the time of danger. You should discern the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*) nature of formations (*saṅkhāra dhamma*). If you can practise Vipassanā thoroughly before death takes place, you may attain one of the paths (*magga*) and fruitions (*phala*), and reach a happy realm after death. But if you attain arahantship, you attain Parinibbāna. Should you, however, not have psychic powers, nor jhāna, nor be able to practise Vipassanā, you may still escape, due to good kamma alone. If you have good enough kamma, which ensures a long life, there may also be a chance to escape from this danger, just like Mahājanaka bodhisatta. He was the only person to survive a shipwreck. After swimming for seven days and seven nights, he was eventually saved by a deva.

Question 6.7 After attaining the path and fruition, a noble one (*ariya*) does not regress to become a worldling (*puthujjana*), this is a law of

¹For the dependence between mind and body (mentality-materiality), please see also p.6

nature (*sammatta niyāma*). Similarly, one who has received a definite prophecy cannot abandon his bodhisatta practice. This too is a natural law. But The Buddha declared that everything is impermanent¹. Are these fixed laws in accordance with the law of impermanence?

Answer 6.7 Here you should understand what is fixed and what is permanent. The law of kamma says unwholesome kammas (*akusala kamma*) produce bad results, and wholesome kammas (*kusala kamma*) produce good results. This is the natural law of kamma (*kamma niyāma*). Does that mean that the wholesome and unwholesome kammas are permanent (*nicca*)? Please think about it.

If the wholesome kammas are permanent then consider this: Now you are listening to Dhamma concerning The Buddha Abhidhamma. This is called wholesome kamma of listening to Dhamma (*Dhammasāvana kusala kamma*). Is it permanent? Please think about it.

If it were permanent, then during your whole life you would have only this kamma, no other. Do you understand? Wholesome kammas produce good results and unwholesome kammas produce bad results. This is a natural law, but it does not mean that the kammas are permanent. Wholesome intentions (*kusala cetanā*) and unwholesome intentions (*akusala cetanā*) are kamma. As soon as they arise they pass away; they are impermanent. That is their nature.

¹The Buddha did not say: 'Everything is impermanent'; He said: All formations are impermanent. (Dhp. v.277)

But the force of kamma, the capacity to produce the results of kammās, still exists in the mentality-materiality process.

Suppose there is a mango tree. Now there is no fruit on the tree, but it is certain that one day it will bear fruit. This is a natural law. You could say the capacity to produce fruit exists in the tree. What is that capacity? If we study the leaves, branches, bark and stems we cannot see it, but that does not mean it does not exist, because one day that tree will produce fruit. In the same way we do not say wholesome and unwholesome kammās are permanent. We say the force of kamma exists in the mentality-materiality process as a capacity, and that one day, when the force matures, it produces its result.

Let us now discuss the natural fixed law, the law of nature (*sammatta niyāma*). We say path and fruition dhammas are dhammas of a natural law, but we do not say they are permanent (*nicca*). They are also impermanent (*anicca*), but the force of Path Knowledge exists in the mentality-materiality process of those who have attained a path, fruition, and Nibbāna. That force exists because of a natural fixed law, and has a natural result. For example, the force of the Stream-Entry Path (*Sotāpatti magga*) results in the Stream-Entry Fruition (*Sotāpatti phala*), and is a contributing cause for higher and higher fruits. But it cannot result in lower fruits. This is also a law of nature.

Here you should think about this: to attain arahantship is not easy. You have to practise with great effort: strong and powerful perseverance is necessary. For example, in his last life our Saṅkhamuni bodhisatta practised very hard (for over six years) to attain arahantship associated with Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbāññuta*

ñāna). You can imagine how hard it was. So if after attaining arahantship with enormous difficulty, he became a worldling (*puṭhujjana*) again, what would be the fruit of the practice? You should think about this carefully.

In this connection, let us look at when a bodhisatta can receive a definite prophecy.¹

*Manussattaṃ liṅgasampatti, hetu satthāradassanaṃ;
Pabbājī gūṇasampatti, adhikāro ca chandaṭṭhā;
Aṭṭhadhammasamodhānā abhinīhāro samijjhati.*

He can receive a definite prophecy when the following eight conditions are fulfilled:

1. *Manussattaṃ*: he is a human being.
2. *Liṅgasampatti*: he is a male.
3. *Hetu* (cause or root): he has sufficient pāramīs to attain arahantship while listening to a Buddha utter a short stanza related to the Four Noble Truths. That means, he must have practised Vipassanā thoroughly up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupakkhā ñāna*).
4. *Satthāradassanaṃ* (sight of the Master): he meets a Buddha.
5. *Pabbājī* (going forth): he has gone forth as a hermit or bhikkhu, and has strong and firm faith in the law of kamma.
6. *Gūṇasampatti* (possession of qualities): he has acquired the eight attainments (*samāpatti*) and five mundane psychic powers (*abhiññāna*).

¹ *Buddhavaṃsa*.ii.59 'Sumedha-patthanā Kathā' (*Chronicle of Buddhas: 'Sumedha's Aspirations Explanation'*)

7. *Adhikāro* (extreme dedication): he has sufficient pāramīs to receive a definite prophecy from a Buddha. That means he must in previous lives have practised the pāramīs necessary for attaining Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbāññuta ñāṇa*). In other words, he must have sowed the seeds of knowledge (*vijjā*) and conduct (*caruṇa*) for Omniscient Knowledge in a previous Buddha's dispensation. According to the '*Yasodharā Apadāna*', the future prince Siddhattha had made the wish to attain (and the future princess Yasodharā had made the wish for him to attain) Omniscient Knowledge in the presence of many billions of Buddhas, and had developed all the pāramīs under their guidance. And one way in which he developed his pāramīs was to make a bridge of himself for Dīpaṅkara Buddha and a hundred thousand bhikkhus to cross, knowing that this act would cost him his life.
8. *Chandata* (strong desire): he has a sufficiently strong desire to attain Omniscient Knowledge. How strong is that desire? Suppose the whole world were burning charcoal. If someone told him that he would attain Omniscient Knowledge by crossing the burning charcoal from one end to the other, he would go across the burning charcoal without hesitation. Here we ask you: Would you go across that burning charcoal? If not the whole world, then if just from Taiwan to Pa-Auk it were all burning charcoal, would you go across it? If it were certain that one could attain Omniscient Knowledge that way, the bodhisatta would go across that burning charcoal. That is the strength of his desire for Omniscient Knowledge.

If these eight factors are present in a bodhisatta he will certainly receive a definite prophecy from a Buddha. They were present in our Sakyamuni bodhisatta, when he was the hermit Sumedha,

at the time of Dīpaṅkara Buddha. That is why he received a definite prophecy from Dīpaṅkara Buddha with the words:¹

You shall attain Omniscient Knowledge

**after four incalculables (*asaṅkhyeyya*) and a hundred thousand aeons (*kappa*),
and shall bear the name of Gotama.**

Now, what does it mean that the prophecy is 'definite'? It is definite because it cannot be changed. That does not mean it is permanent. Dīpaṅkara Buddha's mentality-materiality were impermanent. Sumedha's mentality-materiality were also impermanent. This is a fact, but the force of kamma, especially the kammic force of his pāramīs, could not perish so long as he has not attained Omniscient Knowledge. Dīpaṅkara Buddha's words, that is the definite prophecy, also could not be changed, and could not be false. If those words were changed so that the definite prophecy was not true, then there would be another problem, namely that a Buddha would have uttered false speech. A Buddha gives a definite prophecy only when he sees that the above eight conditions have been fulfilled. For example, if a person skilled in agriculture saw a banana tree that was under the right conditions, he would be able to tell you that the tree was going to bear fruit in four months. Why? Because he was skilled in agriculture, and he saw flowers and small leaves growing out from the tree. In the same way, when someone has fulfilled the eight conditions, a

¹ibid.

Buddha can see that he will attain the fruit of Omniscient Knowledge, which is why he makes a definite prophecy.

At the time of Dīpaṅkara Buddha, our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta was the hermit Su-medha, a worldling (*puṭhujjana*). As Prince Siddhattha, before attaining enlightenment he was still a worldling. Only after his enlightenment did he become Sakyamuni Buddha. After attaining the arahant path associated with Omniscient Knowledge, he could not change his arahant path; this is a natural fixed law (*sammatta niyāma*). Here fixed law means that the result of that arahant path cannot change. This does not mean that the arahant path is permanent. It means that its result comes because of a force of kamma that cannot change. What does this mean exactly? It means that it is certain the arahant path will produce arahant fruition, and certain that it will destroy all the defilements, all the unwholesome kamma and all the wholesome kamma, which would otherwise have produced their result after the Parinibbāna. This law of kamma is called a natural fixed law and cannot be changed. So a natural fixed law and a definite prophecy are not contrary to the law of impermanence.

Here again, a further comment is necessary. Making an aspiration or wish alone is not enough to attain Omniscient Knowledge. When bodhisattas receive a definite prophecy, the eight conditions must already be fulfilled. Moreover, a definite prophecy alone cannot produce Buddhahood. Even after the definite prophecy, they must continue to develop the ten pāramīs on the three levels:

1. The ten basic pāramīs¹(*pāramī*)
Giving up their sons, daughters, wives and external property.
2. The ten medium pāramīs(*upapāramī*)
Giving up their limbs and organs, such as eyes and hands.
3. The ten superior pāramīs(*paramattha pāramī*)
Giving up their life.

Altogether there are thirty pāramīs. If we summarize them we have just:

1. Giving (*dāna*)
2. Morality (*sīla*)
3. Mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*)
Samatha and Vipassanā.

They are superior wholesome kammās. Bodhisattas must perfect them by giving up animate and inanimate property, their limbs, and their lives. If you believe you are a bodhisatta, can you and will you perfect these pāramīs? If you can, and if you also have received a definite prophecy from a Buddha, then you shall one day attain Omniscient Knowledge. But according to the Theravāda teachings, only one Buddha can appear at one given time. And for how long must they perfect their pāramīs? After he had received his definite prophecy, our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta developed the pāramīs for four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons. This is the shortest time. But we cannot say exactly

¹ For a list of the ten pāramīs, please see Answer 4.1 ,p.175

how long it takes prior to the definite prophecy. So you should remember: making an aspiration or wish alone, is not enough to become a Buddha.

Question 6.8 When an ordinary disciple has practised Samatha-Vipassanā up to the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition, the Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away, or the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations, he will not be reborn in any of the four woeful realms. Even if he loses his Samatha-Vipassanā due to negligence, the kamma of having practised Samatha-Vipassanā still exists. The ‘*Sotānugata Sutta*’ says also that he will attain Nibbāna quickly.¹ So, why did the Sayadaw, in the Question-and-Answer session of June 2nd, say that a bodhisatta who has received a definite prophecy from a Buddha can, even if he has practised meditation up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations, be reborn in a woeful state?² In which sutta is this mentioned?

Answer 6.8 This is because the bodhisatta way, and ordinary disciple way are not the same. You can find this in The *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Cariyapīṭaka* Pāḷi Texts.

How are the two ways different? Although a bodhisatta has received a definite prophecy from a Buddha, his pāramīs have at that time not yet matured for him to attain Omniscient Knowledge. He must cultivate his pāramīs further. For example,

¹A.IV.IV.v.1 ‘*Sotānugata Sutta*’ (‘One Who Has Heard Sutta’). Mentioned p. 124 and 183

²Please see Answer 4.3, p.179

after receiving the definite prophecy from Dīpaṅkara Buddha, our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta had to continue cultivating his pāramīs for four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons. Between the definite prophecy and the penultimate life, a bodhisatta is sometimes reborn in the animal kingdom, because of previous unwholesome kamma. At this time he is still unable to totally destroy that unwholesome kammic force. So when those unwholesome kammās mature, he cannot escape their results. This is a law of nature.

But ordinary disciples, who have attained the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition, the Knowledge of Arising and Passing-Away, or the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations, have pāramīs mature enough to attain the Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge. For this reason, they attain path and fruition, that is, see Nibbāna, in this life or in their subsequent future life. This is also a law of nature.

Question 6.9 An arahant can also give a definite prophecy; what is the definition of definite prophecy here? In which sutta or other source can this information be found?

Answer 6.9 For that please refer to The *Buddhavaṃsa Pāḷi* (*Chronicle of Buddhas*) and *Apadāna Pāḷi* (*Valorous Deeds*). But only arahants who possess particularly the Knowledge of Discerning the Future (*anāgataṃsa ñāṇa*), a power secondary to the divine eye (*dibba cakkhu*), can give a definite prophecy. And they can see only a limited number of lives into the future, and not many incalculables (*asaṅkhyeyya*), or aeons (*kappa*), as can a Buddha.

Question 6.10 Can one practise Vipassanā while in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception attainment (*nevasañhā-nāsañhāyatana samāpatti*)? In which sutta or other source can the answer be found?

Answer 6.10 One cannot practise Vipassanā while in any jhāna attainment, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is a jhāna. Why? Because in developing Vipassanā, we do usually not use the same objects as we use for developing jhāna.¹ Also, jhāna we develop by concentrating on one and the same object (e.g. the ānāpāna-, or kasiṇa-nimitta), whereas Vipassanā we develop by examining different objects. For example, the object of the ānāpāna-jhānas is the ānāpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta: a concept, not ultimate reality. But the object of Vipassanā is not a concept; it is ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes, including the jhāna dhammas (e.g. the thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna, the thirty-two mental formations of the second jhāna, the thirty-one mental formations of the third, fourth and immaterial jhanās).²

Only after having emerged from the jhāna can one practise Vipassanā meditation on, for example, the jhāna-consciousness and its associated mental factors, in this case the thirty-one mental formations. It is mentioned in the '*Anupada Sutta*' in the

¹Exceptions are, for example, the second and fourth immaterial jhānas, when you concentrate on the consciousness of the preceding immaterial jhāna (not a concept). For details, please see above 'The Four Immaterial Jhānas', p.79.

²For how you discern jhāna cognitive processes, please see above p.201.

Majjhima Nikāya.¹ There The Buddha describes in detail the Venerable Sāriputta's meditation in the fifteen days after he had attained stream-entry.

The Venerable Sāriputta entered, for example, the first jhāna. He emerged from it, and discerned the thirty-four first-jhāna mental formations, one by one, as impermanence, suffering, and non-self, by seeing their arising-, static- and passing-away stages. He discerned in this manner up to the base of nothingness jhāna. This is Vipassanā of Individual dhammas (*anupadadhamma vipassanā*), in which the mental formations are discerned one by one. But when he reached the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he could discern only the mental formations as a group. This is Vipassanā of Comprehension in Groups (*kalāpa sammāsana vipassanā*). Only a Buddha can discern the mental formations of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception one by one. Because they are extremely subtle, even a Chief Disciple like the Venerable Sāriputta cannot discern them one by one.²

Question 6.11 Can a person who is mentally abnormal, hears voices, has schizophrenia, a brain disease, stroke or malfunction of the brain and nerves, practise this type of meditation? If he can, what kinds of precaution should he take?

Answer 6.11 Such people can practise this type of meditation, but usually they do not succeed, because they cannot concentrate

¹M.III.ii.1 '*Anupada Sutta*' ('One by One Sutta'), mentioned also in connection with insight into only feeling, Answer 4.6, p.186.

²ibid.A.

long enough. By 'long enough' is meant that when one's concentration is strong and powerful, it must be maintained for many hours, and many sittings. Usually, such people's concentration is inconstant. This is a problem. They may succeed, if they can maintain their concentration over many successive sittings, over many days or many months.

There is a famous example: the case of Paṭācārā. Her husband, two children, parents, and brothers all died on the same day. She went mad with grief, and wandered about with no clothes on. One day she came to the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatti where The Buddha was teaching Dhamma. Her pāramīs of previous lives were ready to mature. Due to this, as well as to the lovingkindness and compassion of The Buddha, she was able to listen to the Dhamma with respect.

Slowly her mind became quiet, and she understood the Dhamma. Very soon she became a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). She ordained as a bhikkhunī, and continued her meditation. She could maintain her concentration and insight-knowledge, and one day her meditation matured. She became an arahant with the five mundane psychic powers, and Four Analytical Knowledges.¹ Of the bhikkhunīs who were expert in the monastic rule, she was first. She observed the rule very strictly, and learnt it by heart, including the commentaries.

She had been developing her pāramīs from Padumuttara Buddha's dispensation till Kassapa Buddha's dispensation, and par-

ticularly during Kassapa Buddha's dispensation. At that time she was the daughter of a King Kikī. She practised *komāri brahmacariya* for twenty thousand years. *Komāri brahmacariya* is to observe the five precepts, but in place of the ordinary precept of abstinence from sexual misconduct, complete chastity is observed. She cultivated the three trainings, morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), as a lay devotee, for twenty-thousand years. Those pāramīs matured in Gotama Buddha's dispensation. So, although she had gone mad, she was able to regain her mind, practise the three trainings well, and became an arahant.

When they practise meditation, such people need *kalyāna mitta*, which is good teachers, good friends, and spiritual friends. Proper medicine and proper food also helps. From our experience, we know that most of them cannot maintain their concentration for a long time. Usually they do not succeed.

Question 6.12 If a person, who does not have good human relations, succeeds in attaining the fourth jhāna, will this improve his skill in communicating with others? Can attaining jhāna correct such problems?

Answer 6.12 These problems occur usually because of hatred (*dosa*). It is one of the hindrances. As long as a person is unable to change this attitude, he cannot attain jhāna. But if he can remove this attitude, he can attain not only jhāna, but also the paths and fruitions up to arahantship. A famous example is the Venerable Channa Thera. He was born on the same day as our bodhisatta, in the palace of King Suddhodana in Kapilavatthu. He was the son of one of King Suddhodana's female slaves. He became one of

¹For the Four Analytical Knowledges, please see Answer 4.2, p.177

the bodhisatta prince Siddhattha's playmates, when they were young. This gave later rise to much conceit in him. He thought things like: 'This is my King; The Buddha was my playmate; the Dhamma is our Dhamma; when he renounced the world, I followed him up to the bank of the Anomā River. No one else did. Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna etc. are flowers that blossomed later, etc.' Because of this, he always used harsh language. He did not show respect to Mahātheras like the Venerable Sāriputta, the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna and others. So no one had friendly relations with him. He could not attain jhāna or path and fruition in The Buddha's lifetime, because he was unable to remove his conceit and hatred.

On the night of The Buddha's Parinibbāna, The Buddha told the Venerable Ānanda to mete out the noble punishment (*brahmadanda*) on the Venerable Channa. It means that no one was to talk to the Venerable Channa, even if he wanted to. When nobody talked with the Venerable Channa, his conceit and hatred disappeared. This act of the Saṅgha (*saṅgha kamma*) took place in the Ghositārāma monastery in Kosambī, five months after The Buddha's Parinibbāna.

The Venerable left Ghositārāma, and went to the Isipatana monastery in the deer park near Benares. He worked hard on meditation but was, in spite of great effort, not successful. So one day, he went to the Venerable Ānanda and asked him to help him. Why was he not successful? He discerned the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of the five aggregates, but did not discern dependent-origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). So the Venerable Ānanda taught him how to discern dependent-origination, and

taught him the '*Kaccānagotta Sutta*'.¹ After listening to the Venerable Ānanda's Dhamma talk, the Venerable Channa attained stream-entry. He continued his practice and very soon became an arahant. So if a person can change his bad character, and practise Samatha-Vipassanā in the right way, he can attain jhāna, path and fruition.

¹ S.II.1.ii.5 '*Kaccānagotta Sutta*' '*Kaccānagotta Sutta*', and S.III.1.ix.8 '*Channa Sutta*' ('Channa Sutta')

Questions and Answers 7

Question 7.1 What is the difference between perception (*saññā*) and the perception-aggregate (*saññākkhandha*), and between feeling (*vedāna*) and the feeling-aggregate (*vedānākkhandha*)?

Answer 7.1 The eleven types of perception (*saññā*) together are called the perception-aggregate (*saññākkhandha*). The eleven types of feeling (*vedānā*) together are called the feeling-aggregate (*vedānākkhandha*). What are the eleven? Past, present, future, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, near, and far. All five aggregates should be understood in the same way. Please refer to the ‘*Khandha Sutta*’¹ of the ‘*Khandha Vagga*’ in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* for the explanation.

Question 7.2 To which associated mental factors do memory, inference and creativity belong? They are part of the five aggregates, but how do they become suffering (*dukkha*)?

Answer 7.2 What is memory? If you remember Samatha meditation-objects, such as a kasiṇa- or ānāpāna-nimitta is right mindfulness (*sammā sati*). If you can see past, present, and future ultimate mentality-materiality (*paramattha nāma-rūpa*) and their causes, and see them as impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*), this is also right mindfulness (*sammā sati*); the mindfulness associated with insight-knowledge. This mindfulness is associated with thirty-three mental formations, which together are the four mentality aggregates (*nāmakkhanda*). Remembering The Buddha,

¹ ‘*Khandha Sutta*’ (‘Aggregates Sutta’) quoted p.5

the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and offerings made in the past is also right mindfulness (*sammā sati*). When the remembering of actions produces wholesome dhammas (*kusala dhammā*), it is also right mindfulness, but not when it produces unwholesome dhammas (*akusala dhammā*). These are unwholesome perceptions (*akusala saññā*), perceptions associated with unwholesome dhammas; they are also the four mentality aggregates.

The wholesome and unwholesome mentality aggregates are impermanent. As soon as they arise, they pass away; they are subject to constant arising and passing-away, which is why they are suffering.

Question 7.3 Which associated mental factor does ‘Taking an object’ involve?

Answer 7.3 All consciousnesses (*citta*) and associated mental factors (*cetasika*) take an object. Without an object they cannot occur. Consciousness and associated mental factors are the subject. The subject, *ārammaṇika dhamma*, cannot arise without an object (*ārammaṇa*). *ārammaṇika* is the dhamma or phenomenon that takes an object. In other words, the dhamma that knows an object. If there is no object to be known, then there is no dhamma that knows. Different groups of consciousness and associated mental factors take different objects. There are eighty-nine types of consciousness (*citta*), and fifty-two types of associated mental factor (*cetasika*); they all take their respective object. For example, the path- and fruition-consciousnesses and associated mental factors (*magga-citta cetasika* and *phala-citta cetasika*) take only one object, Nibbāna; an ānāpānā jhāna-consciousness and associated mental

factors take only one object, the ānāpānā paṭibhāga-nimitta; the earth-kasiṇa jhāna takes only the earth-kasiṇa paṭibhāga-nimitta as object. They are supramundane and fine-material sphere consciousnesses. But a sensual-realm consciousness (*kāmāvacara citta*) takes different objects, good or bad. If you want to know in detail, you should study the Abhidhamma; more exactly the *Ārammaṇa* section of the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgha*.¹

Question 7.4 Does work for the Saṅgha affect one's meditation? Does it depend on the individual, or can one achieve a certain degree of concentration, after which work has no effect?

Answer 7.4 In many suttas The Buddha criticizes bhikkhus who practise the following:

- Pleasure in working (*kammārāmatā*)
- Pleasure in talking (*bhassārāmatā*)
- Pleasure in sleeping (*niddārāmatā*)
- Pleasure in company (*saṅghaṇikārāmatā*)
- Not controlling the faculties (*indriyesu aguttadvāratā*)
- Not knowing the proper amount of food to take.... (*bhojāne amattaññutā*)
- Not trying to practise Samatha-Vipassanā with vigilance (moderate sleep) (*jāgarīye ananuyuttā*)
- Laziness in Samatha-Vipassanā practice (*kusita [or] kosajja*)

So if there is any work you have to do for the Saṅgha or yourself, try to do it as quickly as possible, and then return to your meditation with a peaceful mind.

¹ e.g. *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, Ed. Bhikkhu Bodhi, BPS

If you enjoy working too much, it is a hindrance to meditation, because strong and powerful mindfulness on the meditation object can then not be attained: enjoying work does not produce good concentration.

Question 7.5 Can a person who develops the jhānas with evil intent benefit from attaining them? And how about a person who has, for example, spent the money of a Saṅgha¹ for his personal use, and does not think it is wrong. When he attains jhāna up to the fourth jhāna, does his mind or view change?

Answer 7.5 In this case you should distinguish between a layman and a bhikkhu. If a bhikkhu has committed an offence (*āpatti*), it is a hindrance to attain jhāna. For example, if he has appropriated the allowable requisite of a Saṅgha for his personal use, it is not easy for him to attain jhāna, unless he corrects that offence (*āpatti*). That means he must pay it back with requisites of equal value to the allowable requisites he used. Then he should confess his offence in front of the Saṅgha, or to another bhikkhu. That means he should do a confession of offence (*āpattipaṭidesanā*). After correcting his fault, if he practises Samatha-Vipassanā, he can attain jhāna, path, and fruition. If, without correcting his fault he really did attain jhāna, then maybe he is not a real bhikkhu, and so the offence was in fact not an offence.

¹ The Buddha made it a serious offence against the monastic rule (*Vinaya*) for a monk to accept, receive, possess, or handle money. This prohibition is observed by the Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sa-yadaw.

For lay-people, purification of conduct is also necessary, and it is better if they purify their conduct before meditating, that is, if they undertake either the five or eight precepts. That way, while meditating, their conduct is pure, and they can attain jhāna, although they were evil before meditation. For example, in the *Dhammapada Commentary*, there is a story about the servant Khujjuttarā.¹ She was a servant of King Udena's wife Queen Sāmāvatī. Every day King Udena gave her eight coins to buy flowers for the queen, and every day Khujjuttarā put four of the coins into her pocket, and bought flowers with only the other four. One day, The Buddha came with the Saṅgha for almsfood at the florist's house. Khujjuttarā helped the florist give the almsfood. After the meal The Buddha gave a Dhamma-talk, during which Khujjuttarā developed shame at having stolen the money, and decided not to steal any more. Her decision is an example of morality purified while listening to the Dhamma. With meditation, Khujjuttarā became a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). On that day she did not put four coins in her pocket, but bought flowers for all eight coins. When she gave the flowers to Queen Sāmāvatī, the queen was surprised because there were more flowers than usual. Then Khujjuttarā confessed.

Consider also the case of the Venerable Aṅgulimāla. Before he became a bhikkhu, he was a notorious murderer. But as a bhikkhu, he purified his conduct and strove hard in meditation. So he was able to attain arahantship.

¹DhA.I.ii.1 'Sāmāvatī Vatthu' ('Sāmāvatī Case')

Consider also this fact: in the round of rebirths everybody has done good and bad actions. There is no one who is free from bad actions.¹ But if they purify their conduct while meditating, then previous bad actions cannot prevent them from attaining jhāna. That is, however, only as long as those previous bad actions are not any of the five immediate kammās (*anantariya kamma*).²

The five immediate kammās are:

1. Killing one's mother,
2. Killing one's father,
3. Killing an arahant,
4. With evil intention shedding the blood of a Buddha,
5. Causing a schism in the Saṅgha.

If any of these evil actions has been done one cannot attain jhāna, path, and fruition, just like King Ajātasattu. King Ajātasattu had enough pāramīs to become a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) after listening to the '*Sāmaññaphala Sutta*'.³ But because he had killed his own father, King Bimbisāra, it did not happen.

You asked whether after attaining jhāna, such people's mind or view changes. Jhāna can remove the hindrances for a long time. 'A long time' mean, if they enter jhāna for about an hour, then

¹In other words, if bad actions in the past made it impossible to attain jhāna, no one would be able to attain jhāna.

²Please see e.g. A.V.ix.3 '*Paṅkappa Sutta*' ('Festering Sutta'). These five kammās are called 'immediate', because they will definitely ripen in the present life, and give rise to rebirth in the big hell of Avīci, or one of its minor hells, as was the case for King Ajātasattu.

³D.2 'Fruits of Recluseship Sutta'

within that hour the hindrances do not occur. When they emerge from jhāna, the hindrances may recur because of unwise attention. So we cannot say for certain whether such a person's mind will change with jhāna. We can say only that so long as he is in jhāna, the hindrances do not occur.¹

There are exceptions, as for example, with the Mahāthera Mahānāga.² Although he had practised Samatha and Vipassanā meditation for more than sixty years, he was still a worldling (*pu-thujjana*). Even so, because of his strong, powerful Samatha and Vipassanā practices, no defilements appeared in those sixty years. Due to this, he thought he was an arahant. But one of his disciples, the arahant Dhammadinna, knew he was still a worldling, and helped him realize indirectly that this was so. When Mahānāga Mahāthera discovered that he was still a worldling, he practised Vipassanā, and within a few minutes attained arahantship. But this is a most exceptional case.

You should remember another thing too: he was expert in the scriptures (*pariyatti*) as well as practice (*paṭipatti*). He was also a meditation teacher (*kammaṭṭhānācariya*), and there were many arahants who, like Dhammadinna, were his disciples. Although he was expert in Samatha and Vipassanā, sometimes misunderstandings occurred in his mind, because of a similarity in experiences. So if you think to yourself, 'I have attained the first jhāna, etc.', you should examine your experience thoroughly over many days, and

¹Regarding jhāna and Vipassanā and views, please see also Answer 7.7, and Answer 7.9

²Vs.xx 'Vipassanupakkilesa Kathā' B733 ('Insight Imperfection Explanation' Ñ110-113)

many months. Why? If it is real jhāna and real Vipassanā, then they are beneficial to you, as they can help you attain real Nibbāna, which is the 'Pureland'¹ of Theravāda Buddhism. But artificial jhāna and artificial Vipassanā cannot give rise to this benefit. Do you want the real benefit or the artificial benefit? You should ask yourself this question.

So we should like to suggest, that you do not say to others, 'I have attained the first jhāna, etc.' too soon, because there may be someone who does not believe you. It could be that your experience is genuine, but it could also be false like with Mahānāga Mahāthera. You should be aware of this problem.

Question 7.6 What is the difference between rūpa-kalāpas and ultimate materiality (*paramattha rūpa*)?²

Answer 7.6 Rūpa-kalāpas are small particles. When a yogi analyses those little particles, he sees ultimate materiality (*paramattha rūpa*). In a rūpa-kalāpa, there are at least eight types of materiality: earth, water, fire, wind, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. These eight types of materiality are ultimate materiality. In some

¹**Pureland** The so-called 'Western Land', 'Land of Ultimate Bliss' in Mahāyāna teaching, where a Buddha called Amitabhā Buddha is waiting. Rebirth there is obtained by reciting his name. The aim in the Mahāyāna tradition is, on the whole, rebirth in Pureland, as all who go there will become Buddhas, and then go and save all beings of all world systems. The Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw speaks here of 'the "Pureland" of Theravāda Buddhism' only as a metaphor for Nibbāna that will suit his Mahāyāna audience: he is not suggesting that Nibbāna is a place, or in any way to be compared with the 'Western Land' etc. Please see 'supramundane realm' (*lokutara bhūmi*) explained Answer 3.12, p. 127

²For details between rūpa-kalāpas and ultimate materiality, please see further p. 152

rūpa-kalāpas there is a ninth too: life-faculty materiality (*jīvita rūpa*); and in others a tenth: sex-materiality (*bhāva rūpa*) or transparent-element materiality (*pasāda rūpa*). These eight, nine or ten types of materiality are all ultimate materiality.

Question 7.7 When a yogi is able to see rūpa-kalāpas or ultimate materiality, will his mind (*citta*) and views (*diṭṭhi*) change?

Answer 7.7 When he with insight-knowledge sees ultimate materiality in each rūpa-kalāpa, his mind and views change, but only temporarily, because insight-knowledge removes wrong views and other defilements only temporarily. It is the noble path (*ariyamagga*) that stage by stage destroys wrong views and other defilements totally.¹

Question 7.8 How does concentration purify the mind (*citta visuddhi*)? What kinds of defilement (*kilesa*) are removed by concentration?

Answer 7.8 Concentration practice is directly opposite the five hindrances. Access- and first-jhāna concentration remove the five hindrances for a long time. Second-jhāna concentration removes applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*). Third-jhāna concentration removes joy (*pīti*). Fourth-jhāna concentration removes bliss (*sukha*). In this way, the mind is purified by concentration and that is called purification of mind (*citta visuddhi*).²

¹Regarding jhāna and Vipassanā and views, please see also Answer 7.5, and Answer 7.9

²For details regarding the different jhānas, please see 'How You Attain Jhāna', p. 55ff

Question 7.9 How does Vipassanā purify views (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*)? What kinds of defilement (*kilesa*) are removed by Vipassanā?

Answer 7.9 Before seeing ultimate mentality-materiality, their causes, and nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, a yogi may have wrong views or wrong perceptions, such as, 'This is a man, a woman, a mother, a father, a self, etc.' But when he sees ultimate mentality-materiality, their causes, and nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self clearly, this wrong view is removed temporarily. Why is it removed? He sees that there are only ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. He sees also that as soon as they arise, they pass away, which is their nature of impermanence. They are always subject to arising and passing-away, which is their nature of suffering. There is no self in these mentality-materiality and causes, which is their nature of non-self. This is insight-knowledge (*vipassanā ñāṇa*). It is right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*), and removes wrong views (*micchā diṭṭhi*). Insight-knowledge also removes defilements such as attachment and conceit, which are 'partners' to wrong view. So while a yogi is practising Vipassanā, right view is present. But it is only temporary, because when he stops meditating, wrong view recurs because of unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). He again perceives: 'this is a man, a woman, a mother, a father, a self, etc.', and the associated defilements such as attachment, conceit, and anger, will also recur. But, when he goes back to Vipassanā meditation, this wrong view again disappears. So insight-knowledge removes wrong views and other defilements only temporarily. When he reaches the path and fruition, however, his Path Knowledge (*magga ñāṇa*)

will destroy those wrong views and other defilements completely, stage by stage.¹

Question 7.10 What is the difference between *citta* and *diṭṭhi*?

Answer 7.10 *Citta* means mind, but in *citta visuddhi* (purification of mind), it refers especially to a consciousness: an access-concentration consciousness (*upacāra-samādhī citta*) or absorption-jhāna consciousness (*appanā-jhāna citta*).² *Diṭṭhi* means wrong view, and is a associated mental factor (*cetasika*). It arises together with the four consciousnesses rooted in greed. A consciousness rooted in greed (*lobhamūla citta*) is associated with either wrong view or conceit.

One wrong view is the perception of self (*atta saññā*). There are two types of perception of self.

1. The world's general perception of self (*loka samañña attavāda*)
This is wrong view as a consequence of convention: the perception that there is a man, woman, father, mother, etc.
2. Wrong view of self (*atta diṭṭhi*)
This is wrong view as a consequence of craving (*taṇhā*): the perception of an indestructible self (*atta*), which may include the perception that the indestructible self is created by a creator (*paramatta*).

In the thirty-one realms there is no self, only mentality-materiality and their causes. They are always impermanent, suffering, and non-self. Outside the thirty-one realms there is no self either.

¹Regarding jhāna and Vipassanā and views, please see also Answer 7.5, and Answer 7.7

²Regarding the different kinds of concentration etc., please see Answer 3.1, p.115

This insight-knowledge is Vipassanā right view (*vipassanā sammā diṭṭhi*). It destroys wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*) temporarily, including wrong view of self. But the Path Knowledge (*magga ñāṇa*), which is path right view (*magga sammā diṭṭhi*), destroys wrong view completely. So what we have is in fact three types of view:

1. Wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*)
2. Vipassanā right view (*vipassanā sammā diṭṭhi*)
which is mundane (*lokiya*).
3. Path right view (*magga sammā diṭṭhi*)
which is supramundane (*lokuttara*).

In the 'Brahmajāla Sutta', all sixty-two types of wrong view that exist are discussed.¹ They all go under wrong view of self, which is also called 'personality wrong view' (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). Personality (*sakkāya*) is the five aggregates, so personality wrong view is to see the five aggregates as self. There are also many types of right view, such as the right views called 'Right Views about the Four Noble Truths' (*catusacca sammā diṭṭhi*):

- Jhāna right view (*jhāna sammā diṭṭhi*)
Jhāna knowledge associated with the jhāna factors.
- Discernment-of-mentality-materiality right view .. (*nāma-rūpa-pariggaha sammā diṭṭhi*) Knowledge of Ultimate Mentality-Materiality.
- Kamma and kamma-result right view (*kammassakatā sammā diṭṭhi*)
Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition.

¹D.i.1 'Brahmajāla Sutta' ('Supreme Net Sutta')

- Vipassanā right view(*vipassanā sammā dīṭṭhi*)
Insight-knowledge of the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of mentality-materiality and their causes.
- Path right view(*magga sammā dīṭṭhi*)
Knowledge of Nibbāna.
- Fruition right view(*phala sammā dīṭṭhi*)
Knowledge of Nibbāna.

Question 7.11 How should a yogi practise wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) in his daily life, and how in his Samatha-Vipassanā practice?¹

Answer 7.11 The best wise attention is Vipassanā. If you practise up to the Vipassanā level, you will have the truly best wise attention. If you then practise Vipassanā in your daily life, it will produce good results, such as path and fruition that see Nibbāna. But if you cannot practise up to the Vipassanā level, you should consider the fact that all conditioned things are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). This is also wise attention, but very weak, and only second-hand.

You can also practise the four sublime abidings (*brahma vihāra*), and especially the sublime abiding of equanimity (*upekkhā brahmavihāra*). That is superior wise attention, because to practise the sublime abiding of equanimity is to see the law of kamma in ‘*sabbe sattā kammassakā*’: ‘All beings are the owners of their kamma’. You can also sometimes reflect on the effects of unwise attention.

¹For details regarding wise/unwise attention, please see also ‘Wise and Unwise Attention’, p. **Error!**
Reference source not found.204.

Unwise attention causes many unwholesome kammās to come one by one. These unwholesome kammās will produce much suffering in the four woeful realms (*apāya*). To know this is wise attention. You should practise it in your daily life.

Question 7.12 What is the difference between attention (*manasikāra*) and practising the seven enlightenment factors (*bojjhaṅga*)?

Answer 7.12 When you practise the seven enlightenment factors, they are usually at the head of thirty-four mental formations that include attention. Sometimes the thirty-four mental formations are called ‘insight-knowledge’, because the thirty-fourth mental formation, wisdom (*paññā*) is the main factor.

In this connection, you should know the three types of attention:

1. Attention
as the basic cause for the object(*ārammaṇa paṭipādaka manasikāra*)
2. Attention
as the basic cause for the cognitive-process....(*vīthi paṭipādaka manasikāra*)
3. Attention
as the basic cause for the impulsion.....(*javana paṭipādaka manasikāra*)

Attention as the basic cause for the object is the associated mental factor of attention. Its function is to make the object clear to the yogi’s mind.

Attention as the basic cause for the cognitive-process is the five-door advertent-consciousness (*pañcadvārāvajjana*) in the five-door cognitive-process (*pañcadvāra vīthi*). Its function is to enable all five-door cognitive-processes to take their respective object.

Attention as the basic cause for the impulsion is the mind-door advertent-consciousness (*manodvārāvajjana*) in the mind-door cogni-

tive-process (*manodvāra vīthi*), and determining-consciousness (*voṭṭhapana*) in the five-door cognitive-process. It is either wise attention or unwise attention. Its function is to make the impulsion (*javana*) occur. If it is wise attention, the impulsion (*javana*) is for worldlings (*puthujjana*) and learners (*sekkha*) wholesome, and for arahants only functional (*kiriya*). When it is unwise attention, the impulsion is always unwholesome, and cannot occur in arahants.

Question 7.13 Could the Sayadaw please explain the diagram? Is it necessary, in this system of meditation, to practise the more than thirty types of meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*)? What are the benefits in doing so?

Answer 7.13 We are not interested in diagrams. It is based on a diagram drawn by a school teacher, who is very interested in diagrams.

In Pa-Auk we teach many types of Samatha meditation to those who want to practise them. If they do not want to practise all of them, but only one, such as *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), then we teach only that Samatha meditation. When they have jhāna, we take them straight to Vipassanā, systematically, stage by stage.

While practising Samatha-Vipassanā, there may sometimes be hindrances such as lust (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and discursive thought (*vitakka*), which will disturb their concentration and Vipassanā meditation. The following meditation subjects are the best weapons to remove those hindrances.

The Buddha gives them in the '*Meghiya Sutta*':¹

- *Asubhā bhāvetabbā rāgassa pahānāya.*
(You should practise repulsiveness meditation (*asubha bhāvanā*) to remove lust (*rāga*.)
- *Mettā bhāvetabbā byāpādassa pahānāya.*
(You should practise lovingkindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*) to remove hatred or anger (*dosa*.)
- *Ānāpānasati bhāvetabbā vitakkupachedāya.*
(You should practise *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) to remove discursive thought (*vitakka*.)

Furthermore, a concentrated mind can see ultimate dhammas (*paramattha dhamma*) as they really are.² Of the concentration practices, the eight attainments (*samāpatti*) are very high and powerful; so to those who want to practise the eight attainments thoroughly, we teach kasiṇa meditation too. If you want to understand the diagram thoroughly, you need to practise Samatha-Vipassanā up to the Path and Fruition Knowledges. Only then will you fully understand the diagram.

Why are we not interested in diagrams? Because it is not enough to show the whole system on one page. We have ex-

¹ U.IV.1 and A.IX.Li.3 '*Meghiya Sutta*'

² These, The Buddha's words, are quoted above p. 14, and p. 29

plained the whole system in more than three thousand six hundred pages in Burmese: one page is not enough.

Question 7.14 Can a hating mind produce many generations of temperature-produced octad-kalāpas (*utuja ojaṭṭhamaka-kalāpa*), and make the eyes flash?

Answer 7.14 To say ‘a consciousness produces light’ is only a metaphor, because in fact, apart from the rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi citta*), all consciousnesses that arise dependent upon the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*) produce consciousness-produced rūpa-kalāpas (*cittaja kalāpa*).¹ Among these rūpa-kalāpas there is always colour (*vaṇṇa*). It is brighter if the consciousness is a Samatha-, or Vipassanā-consciousness. This is discussed in the Pāḷi Texts, Commentaries, and Sub-commentaries. But it does not say that consciousness-produced materiality produced by a hating mind also produces light.

Question 7.15 Is the seeing mind that sees mentality-materiality itself included in mentality-materiality? Is it included in wisdom?

Answer 7.15 Yes, it is.² You can see it at all the stages of Vipassanā, especially at the stage of Knowledge of Dissolution (*bhaṅga ñāṇa*). It says in the *Visuddhi Magga*:³

¹For a discussion of consciousness-produced materiality, please see p.163, and in relation to the light produced by Samatha and Vipassanā consciousnesses, please see also Answer 4.10, p. 194

²For details in this regard, please see ‘The Seven Ways for Mentality’, p.262ff, and ‘How You Develop the Knowledge of Dissolution’, p.272f.

³Vs.xxi ‘*Bhaviṅgānupassanāñāṇa Kathā*’ B742 (‘Dissolution-Contemplation Knowledge’ Ñ13)

Ñātañca ñāṇañca ubhopi vipassati.

(We must practise Vipassanā on both the known (*ñāta*) and knowledge (*ñāṇa*.)

‘The known’ means the five aggregates and their causes, which should be known with insight-knowledge. ‘Knowledge’ means the insight-knowledge that knows the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of the five aggregates and their causes, which are all formations (*saṅkhāra dhamma*). Insight-knowledge is wisdom, Vipassanā right view. Usually, Vipassanā right view arises together with thirty-three or thirty-two mental formations, which gives thirty-four or thirty-three mental formations respectively. They are called ‘insight-knowledge’. They are mentality dhammas, because they incline towards the object of the impermanent, suffering or non-self nature of formations.

Why do you need to see the insight-knowledge itself as impermanence, suffering, and non-self? Because some yogis may ask, or think about whether insight-knowledge itself is permanent or impermanent, happiness or suffering, self or non-self. To answer this question, you need to see the Vipassanā cognitive-process itself as impermanence, suffering, and non-self, especially the thirty-four mental formations in each impulsion moment, headed by that insight-knowledge. Furthermore, some yogis may become attached to their insight-knowledge. They may become proud, because they can practise Vipassanā well and successfully. It is also to remove and prevent these defilements that you need to see the insight-knowledge, or Vipassanā cognitive-process itself as impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

Question 7.16 How to overcome the uninterested and bored mind state that occurs during long periods of meditation, or staying alone in the forest? Is this kind of mind state an unwholesome dhamma?

Answer 7.16 This type of mind state is called indolence (*kosajja*), and is usually a weak unwholesome dhamma associated with greed or hatred, etc. This type of mind state occurs because of unwise attention. If a person's unwise attention is changed to and replaced with wise attention, then he may succeed in his meditation.

To overcome this mind state you should sometimes recall that our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta's success was due to his perseverance. You should also recall the stories of arahants who had striven hard and with great difficulty to succeed in their meditation, to eventually attain arahantship. No one can have great success without striving. It is necessary especially in meditation to persevere. Wise attention too is very important. You should try to pay attention to the nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self in conditioned things. If you do like this, you may one day succeed.

Question 7.17 Could the Sayadaw please give an example of a wish that is not associated with ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*)?

Answer 7.17 If you practise Vipassanā when performing wholesome kammās, and also see the impermanence, suffering, or non-self nature of those wholesome kammās, then ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*) do not arise. If you cannot practise

Vipassanā, then make the following wish: '*Idaṃ me puññaṃ Nibbānassa paccayo hotu*': 'May this merit be a contributing cause for the realization of Nibbāna.'

Question 7.18 If the five aggregates are non-self, then who, Sayadaw, is giving a Dhamma talk? In other words, if the five aggregates are non-self, no Sayadaw is giving a Dhamma talk. So is there a relationship between the five aggregates and the self?

Answer 7.18 There are two types of truth: conventional truth (*sammuti sacca*) and ultimate truth (*paramattha sacca*).

You should differentiate clearly between these two types of truth. According to conventional truth there is a Buddha, a Sayadaw, a father, a mother, etc. But according to ultimate truth, there is no Buddha, no Sayadaw, no father, no mother, etc. This you can see if you have strong enough insight-knowledge. If you look at The Buddha with insight-knowledge, you see ultimate mentality-materiality, which are the five aggregates. They are impermanent, suffering, and non-self. There is no self. In the same way if you look at me, or at a father, or mother etc., with insight-knowledge, you see only ultimate mentality-materiality, the five aggregates, which are impermanent, suffering, and non-self. There is no self. In other words, there is no Buddha, Sayadaw, father, mother, etc. The five aggregates and their causes are called formations. So, formations are talking about formations, sometimes about Nibbāna. There is no self at all. So how can we speak of a relationship?

For example, if someone were to ask you, 'Are rabbit horns long or short?', how should you answer? Or if they asked, 'Is the

body hair on a tortoise black or white?', how should you answer? If the self does not exist at all, we cannot speak of a relationship between it and the five aggregates. Even The Buddha did not answer this type of question. Why? Suppose you said rabbit horns are long; that would mean you accept that rabbits have horns. And if you said rabbit horns are short; that too would mean you accept that they have horns. Again, if you said a tortoise has black body hair, that would mean you accept that a tortoise has hair. If you said tortoise hair is white, that too would mean you accept it has hair. In the same way, if The Buddha said the five aggregates and the self are related, it would mean he accepted that there is a self. And if he said the five aggregates and the self are not related, it would also mean he accepted that there is a self. That is why The Buddha did not answer this type of question. So we should like to suggest that you try to practise meditation up to the Vipassanā level. Only then can you remove this view of self.

Question 7.19 The Buddha taught the Snake Mantra to bhikkhus. Is chanting the Snake Mantra the same as loving-kindness? Is chanting a mantra a Brahmanic tradition brought into Buddhism?

Answer 7.19: What is a mantra? What is the Snake Mantra? We do not know whether mantras have been handed down from Hinduism. But in the Theravāda Texts there is a protective sutta (*paritta sutta*) called the '*Khandha Paritta*'.¹ The Buddha taught this pro-

¹A.IV.II.ii.7 '*Ahirāja Sutta*' ('Snake Kings Sutta'), called the *Khandha* (Group) *Paritta* (Protective Chant) because *mettā* is extended to all beings in groups: the four types of snake, beings with no legs
Please see further next page

TECTIVE sutta for bhikkhus to recite every day. There is a disciplinary rule (*Vinaya*) which says that if a forest-dwelling bhikkhu or bhikkhunī fails to recite this protective sutta at least once a day, he or she will have committed an offence.

Once, in The Buddha's time, a bhikkhu was dwelling in the forest when a venomous snake bit him. He died. Because of this, The Buddha taught the '*Khandha Paritta*'. The purpose of this protective sutta is similar to lovingkindness meditation. In that sutta there are different ways of extending lovingkindness to different types of snake or dragon. There is also an assertion of truth concerning the Triple Gem, and the qualities of The Buddha and arahants. We shall recite this protective sutta tonight. It is very powerful. You may call it the 'Snake Mantra'. The name is not important. You can call it whatever you like. Some bhikkhus in Myanmar use this protective sutta for those who have been bitten by a venomous snake. It is effective. When they chant this protective sutta many times, and when the victims drink the protective water, the venom slowly decreases in them. Usually they recover. But the effect is not the same in every case. The Buddha taught this protective sutta to prevent bhikkhus from being bitten by venomous snakes. If a bhikkhu recites this protective sutta with respect, and extends lovingkindness to all beings, including snakes, he will meet with no danger. Usually, if he also observes the monastic code, no harm will come to him.

(leeches, worms, fish etc.), with two legs (devas, human beings, birds), with four legs (elephants, dogs, lizards etc.), and with many legs (ants, scorpions, centipedes, spiders etc.).